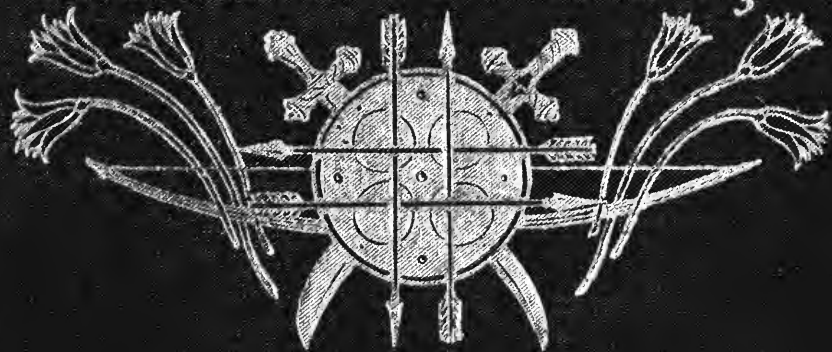


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THE RAGHUVANÇA







Itanagar, "Itanagar City."

THE
RAGHUVANÇA
THE STORY
OF RAGHU'S LINE
BY KÂLIDÂSA

TRANSLATED BY
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PREFATORY NOTE

THE Introduction tells the story of the poet and the poem. For the Mythological Notes which follow, and which I hope will help English readers, I ask the special indulgence of Scholars. A Note on Pronunciation is added. The Index is intended only to supplement very shortly the Mythological Notes.

For the Illustrations which embellish my book I am indebted to the kind permission of Miss Growse, of Thursby Hall, Haslemere, Surrey. These are diminished reproductions of works by native Indian artists, prepared at great expense for her brother, the late Mr. Growse, C.I.E., of the Bengal Civil Service, to adorn his valuable and scholarly translation of the Hindî *Râmâyana*, which may be called the Sacred Book of North-Western Bengal. Mr. Growse's early death is a loss to Indian scholarship that will not easily be repaired.

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INTRODUCTION

KÂLIDÂSA is little more than a name. There hangs over his personal history that mist of time and distance which seems to enwrap all things historical in the early life and thought of Ancient India. But his work is with us,—more of it probably than of any other great Sanskrit author ; and he must always have a special interest for us, as the translation in 1781 of his drama *Çâkuntalâ* by Sir William Jones gave the first impulse to the study of that wonderful literature of old India which has revolutionised philology, and has had very great influence in modifying our thoughts in the political domain also towards our Indian fellow-subjects. The pretty legend that made him one of the “nine gems” at the polished Court of a Vikramâditya reigning in the age of Roman Augustus has vanished before later research, but the charms of his tender Dramas, and of his noble Epics, abide with us.

Kâlidâsa lived probably about the middle of the sixth century of our era, but beyond this we know nothing of him personally. His fame is perennial, as that of India’s greatest dramatist, and the greatest epic poet of her classical days. With the noble simplicity of the *Râmâyana* his work does not come into comparison ; but in respect of true poetic feeling for the aspects of nature, and insight into both the manly and the tender moods of human emotion, he stands very high among the great poets of all lands and ages. That he

fell in his epics occasionally into the snares laid for him by the technical perfection of classical Sanskrit, and played with words and sounds in a way that seems frivolous to us, should not blind us to his great and varied excellence. Nor should we forget how very much less *he* has done this than any other of the famous classical poets of India. Bhâravi in the *Kîrâtârjunîya* and Bhaṭṭa in his poem shows us what temptations Kâlidâsa resisted, and will make us more highly value the self-restraint he has shown in this matter of artificiality.

As I have said, his Dramas are supreme in Indian literature,—which indeed is not rich in that province, considering the nature of the people, who seem apt for such branches of literary activity. But the beauties of *Çâkuntalâ and the Ring* and of *The Hero and the Nymph* have long been before the European and particularly the English public, and I need not dilate on them. Among his own countrymen, however, Kâlidâsa is at least equally renowned as an epic poet of the classical period, which extends over several centuries. There are different lists of the Six “great poems”—Mahâ-Kâvyas; but all name two (*Kumâra-sambhava*, the Birth of the War-God Kârtikeya, and *Raghuvança*, the Story of Raghu’s Line) of Kâlidâsa’s among them; and one that is well accredited would include a third, the graceful Cloud-Messenger, in the short roll of fame. The poem which I have here translated is by far the most esteemed of them all. It is a storehouse of poetry and legend, while the varied metres and exquisitely beautiful language lend it in the original a charm that cannot be transferred into another tongue. It has long been a wonder to me that no one has hitherto done for it what Mr. Griffiths has so well done for its companion, the Birth of the War-

God, especially as it appears (from Stenzler's Preface, p. ii.) that the greater part of the poem had been already translated into English before the work of editing it was given to him. But name and fame of the translator seem to have vanished, nor have I been able to find any further trace of them. And here I must acknowledge my debt to the great scholar just named. While I have used for my work the best native editions of the poem, with constant reference to the Sanskrit commentators, I have always derived the greatest help from Stenzler's Latin translation: without it, indeed, my own would probably not have been undertaken. I must here add also, what only lately came to my knowledge, that Mr. Griffiths *has* made (but not published) what he calls, in his Notes to the translation of the whole *Râmâyana*, a "rough" translation of the *Raghuvansa*. He adds that fragments of it have appeared in print, but I have not seen them.

The Poem as we have it is certainly incomplete. Tradition tells us that in its original form it consisted of twenty-five Cantos, of which only nineteen have come down to us; and the abrupt ending of the poem confirms the tradition.

Its theme is the glories of the great Solar race of Ikshvâku, in which Vishṇu was pleased to become incarnate as Râma, that he might destroy the giant Râvaṇa, who had his capital in Ceylon (Lankâ), and might free gods and men from his tyranny. This supremacy Râvaṇa had won, supplanting Indra, the Thunderer, chief among the Gods inferior to the great Three (Brahmâ, Vishṇu, Çiva,—Creator, Preserver, Destroyer), by the power of his ascetic austerities, which could, according to Brahmanical notions, compel Fate. When therefore his yoke had become too hard to bear, when

the Gods were banished or made to serve him, they sought the aid of Vishṇu, who heard their prayer and promised his help. This he would afford them by taking birth as a man, in the noble kingly line of Raghu; for when Râvaṇa asked to be made invulnerable, he had omitted to secure himself against mere human foes. In our poem Cantos 1 to ix trace the fortunes of Râma's four immediate predecessors, from Dilîpa to Daçaratha; Cantos x to xv are occupied with the story of Râma himself,—from his wonderful birth, through his noble youth and manhood, his triumphant marriage with Sîtâ, victory over Râvaṇa, and happy reign, till the time when he shook off the veil of humanity and returned to his original glory as the Unconditioned God; and Cantos xvi to xix carry on the tale of the Kings who succeeded him to (as we have it) a sad eclipse in the luxurious Agnivarma.

THE STORY BRIEFLY TOLD IN PROSE

(1) The poet makes excuse for his rashness in attempting such an arduous task as that of celebrating the praises of this famous line of Kings. But he has been attracted by its very magnitude. The race is dazzling in its virtue and might, and the great Vâlmiki has trodden the path before him. In the line sprang Dilîpa, pious King, who grew old, rich in the love of his Queen Sudakshinâ and the devotion of his happy subjects, but not blessed with a son to succeed him. So, purifying himself and casting off for a season the cares of sovereignty, he goes with his Queen to seek counsel and help from the saintly Vaçishṭha in his hermitage. After a pleasant journey through lands prosperous and smiling with the

blessings of his rule, where all good omens attend them on the way, they reach the peaceful hermitage. Their errand is told, and the saint points out the remedy for their sorrow. The King had neglected to pay due honour to the Holy Cow, Surabhi, and must now (with his Queen) lead an ascetic life and pay all worship to her offspring—the Saint's own Cow—until she be propitiated, and grant him the desire of his heart.

(2) And the days went by. From early morning to dewy eve the noble, patient King assiduously tended the semi-divine Cow—and at evening the Queen welcomed them back, and herself took up the pleasant, hopeful task.

But one fateful day the King had followed his charge up the green slopes of the Himâlaya, and while he gazed on the beauties of the scene, secure that her own sanctity would protect her from all harm, he was startled by her agonised cry, and in dismay saw her prostrate under the paw of a fierce lion. He fitted an arrow to his bow, but could not draw it, and found himself powerless to help. The lion addressed him in human voice, told him he was set by Çiva to guard a favourite tree beloved by Umâ, that the Cow had trespassed and had justly forfeited her life, and bade him leave her to her fate and himself return, saving his own valuable life. But the King would hear of no desertion. He entreated that he might save his honour though he should lose his life, and offered his own body a ransom for that of his charge, that she might go unharmed. Then the magic scene rolled away: the Cow praised his devotion and promised him the boon he sought, and the two returned to the hermitage. The Queen and her husband drank the sacred milk, and were dismissed in peace and gladness to their own city.

(3) Then in due time the Queen bore to her husband a fair son, delighting all hearts and wearing from his birth the signs of worth and prosperity. His nurture in holy things was intrusted to the wisest Brâhmans in the land, and he richly rewarded their care, whilst the King himself instructed him in the arts of war and the chase. Raghu was he called, the vehement in battle, and he grew up noble and generous, the light of his father's eyes and the hope of his kingdom. Fully trained in all sacred and kingly lore, he was raised to association in his father's dignity, and happily wedded to noble princesses. And Dilîpa, having devolved on his son the cares and honour of the kingdom, set himself to perform the long series of a hundred sacrifices, which is crowned by the great Offering of the Horse, and raises the sacrificer to the rank of Indra, King of Heaven. The God, ever on the watch to foil such enterprise, stole away the destined victim : and the Prince, to whose care it had been committed, pursued the aggressor. He plied him first with vain entreaties, and then boldly attacked him. A terrible battle ensued ; each inflicted wounds on the other ; but at length the God, moved by the courage and devotion of the young hero, relaxed his anger and granted that, though the crowning sacrifice might not be accomplished, yet Dilîpa should win the prize of his sacred acts, and mount to the throne of Heaven. So Dilîpa forsook Earth and Raghu reigned gloriously in his stead.

(4) Raghu, being seated on his father's throne, by his firm but mild rule soon took even a higher place in his people's affections than his father had held ; and the Fortune of the kingdom, like a loving bride, clung closely to him. Just and valiant, he ruled his people for a time in peace ; then,

nobly ambitious, he set forth with a mighty and well-appointed host on a career of universal conquest. In the mild autumn season, when calm skies and pleasant days invited him, and Earth and Heaven rejoiced, he set forth. Smiting down all foes, he led his victorious army across great rivers, over lofty mountains, through pathless forests, to the shores of ocean. Then, having set up everywhere pillars of victory, and restored the vanquished kings to their thrones as his vassals, the hero returned to his capital, Ayodhyâ, and there with magnificent pomp, swelled by the infinite treasures he had received in tribute, and graced by the presence of captive kings, celebrated the gorgeous sacrifice which only a Universal Conqueror may offer!

(5) But the sacrifice he had made involved the bestowal of all his wealth in alms, and at its close the Monarch was as bare of earth's riches as the meanest of his subjects, when there came before him an eminent Brâhman, Kautsa, to ask from his generosity the fee required by his Preceptor Varatantu. In gracious words the king first inquired of the welfare of the Saint and all his dependants, and then the purpose of his guest's coming. The Brâhman, seeing the King had stripped himself of all he possessed, was reluctant to make an unreasonable request; but, being pressed, he told his need. The King invited him to stay for a little while as his guest, and himself prepared to start forth to obtain, by force of arms, if necessary, the almost boundless treasure wanted, from Kuvera the Lord of Wealth. But while he slept, meaning to set forth in the morning, the God poured down, unconstrained, into his palace courtyard riches untold and unimagined. Then ensued a contest of generosity. The Brâhman at first refused to receive more than his Teacher's fee, but was at length persuaded by the generous King to

take the whole ; then he blessed him with the promise of a glorious son to continue his race, and departed.

So to Raghu was born a son, Aja, called after Brahma the Uncreated, noble and brave and gentle as himself, the desire of all eyes and hearts. And when the Prince was fully perfect in wisdom and in arms, his father sent him to Vidarbha, whither King Bhoja had invited many a noble King and Chief, that his fair sister Indumatî might choose her husband from among them. Aja marched with such attendant army as befitted his royal rank, and was welcomed by King Bhoja, having on the way secured a friend in the demi-god Priyamvada, whom he freed from enchantment and who gave him a magic spear whose virtues could strike whole armies with sleep. One night the Prince slept before Vidarbha, and in the morning was roused from his slumbers by the sweet voices of minstrels, hymning him in soft lyrical strains, which form one of the gems of the poem.

(6) Then the Prince, nobly attired, went to join the company of suitor kings in the lofty hall where Princess Indumatî was to make her Maiden's Choice, of the lord of her love and her life. Waiting her entry, there sat round the hall on lofty thrones an anxious assemblage of all the most famous and noble Chiefs of the time, come from far and near to woo the peerless Maid. To hide their anxiety they trifled with their garlands, their jewels, their robes, or talked in whispers to one another. Then, to the sweet sounds of music, borne in a litter, came fair Indumatî into the hall, and the eyes of all were fixed on her. Her guide, Sunandâ, led her past the Kings in their order, eloquently praising each as the Princess slowly passed along the line. But neither the valiant and

pious lord of Magadha, nor he of Avanti, nor of Anga, nor the mighty King of Anûpa, before whom Râvaṇa stooped and who braved fierce Paraçu-Râma's axe ; nor devout Sushena, who in beauty and valour rivals the mighty Gods,—found favour in her eyes. And as she passed, each one, silently rejected, felt the hue of glad hope fade from his face, shadowed by the gloom of failure. Then she passed on, and her guide commended to her the King of Kalinga, lord of the southern realm, bordering on Ocean, where palm-trees wave and spice-laden breezes blow ; and next the Pându King, friend of Indra, ally even of mighty Râvaṇa ; but neither of those powerful Kings won the Maiden's choice, and they too passed into darkness, "like wayside trees lit up but for a moment by a traveller's torch." Onward she went to Prince Aja, and her choice was no more doubtful. She heard his praises, she saw his noble beauty, and she cast over him the wreath that proclaimed her election, and the happy union was welcomed with loud acclaim !

(7) Then did King Bhoja pass to the city, with his sister and her chosen lover, while the disappointed wooers followed in their train. The glad procession was welcomed with loyal shouts of the citizens, while their ladies looked on eagerly from the lattices, hastening—though dishevelled or but half-attired—to see the goodly sight. Next the grave marriage ceremonies were accomplished, hallowed by the witness of Fire and hailed by all onlookers as fortunate. Then the King with lordly gifts dismissed to their own places the suitor-kings, who took their leave with pleasant words, but with thoughts of revenge in their hearts.

So when Aja and his bride on their homeward journey had parted from Bhoja, the banded Kings barred the way, to

carry off the bride. But Aja, placing Indumatî in safety, boldly charged them, and fierce battle was joined. Chariots with chariots, horse with horse, elephant with elephant, met in deadly strife. Heaven was obscured by the dust, and earth flowed with streams of blood. So swift came death that the disembodied warriors saw their lifeless trunks still tottering on the plain, as themselves mounted to heaven, there to renew the strife. The fortune of battle wavered, and Aja had more than once to rally his yielding battalions. At length, weary of slaughter, the Prince used the magical weapon given him by his friend Priyamvada. At once the foes were charmed into sleep, the noise of battle was stilled, the Prince wound his horn to rally his forces, and at his bidding blushing Indumatî set her foot on the necks of his prostrate foes. So, happy and triumphant, they returned to Ayodhyâ, and were welcomed by King Raghu.

(8) Thereafter, King Raghu, rejoicing in his son's glory and happiness, gave the kingdom to Aja, and himself prepared for the life of austerity and meditation with which the pious Kings of the Sun-Race make themselves fit to exchange earthly for heavenly crowns. But his son weeping besought him to stay in the city, and the loving King yielded. So the two remained together, the one by justice and wise counsel ruling his subjects, winning their love and fostering their well-being, while they saw his father live again in him; but the other, subduing all desire, fixing his thoughts on the Supreme,—waited for the call to heaven. When thus some years had gone by, the father passed to his rest, deeply mourned by his son.

Now Indumatî bore to Aja a noble boy, and the clouds of softened regret were dispelled by a new delight, while Aja's life

budded forth in wondrous fulness towards his son Daçaratha, fated father of the divine hero Râma.

But sorrow follows joy. As one day the loving pair sauntered through their pleasant gardens, there fell on Indumatî's breast from the sky a wreath of flowers, fallen from the harp of the Minstrel-Saint Nârada, at touch of which she paled and fell dead. The King swooned, and on recovering burst into a passionate lament for the cruel loss. "Why, O my Beloved, hast thou so suddenly left me, whose heart was all thine own? Never wittingly did I aught to displease thee, yet without a word am I forsaken! Let me too die with thee. Yet was Death kind to slay thee with flowers! O Love, how couldst thou have the heart to leave me, and our son, and even the deer and trees thou hadst tended? All, all mourn for thee. Ah, Beloved, I scarce can think thee dead: the breeze stirs thy hair and rustles through thy dress. But thou art gone from me for ever! Counsellor, Friend, Queen of my heart and home, thou hast left me, and what good is my life now to me? Nought more can I do for thee. Thy fair body must lie on the rough funeral-pyre, and I must drag on my lonely life!" Yet for his people's sake the King lived on, and bore himself nobly though sorrowful. Duty he performed, but joy was gone from his life. The counsels of his Saintly Preceptor, who told him the true story of his lost Indumatî—a Nymph of Heaven condemned for former sin to a period of exile on earth and now recalled to her home—fell on unheeding ears. For a few years he endured; then, committing the kingdom to his son, he peacefully departed, to be reunited for ever to his beloved Indumatî.

(9) Thereafter did mighty Daçaratha rule in righteousness,

just as Yama, beneficent as Indra, terrible as the War-God. He also subdued all the Earth under him, made the Sacrifice for Universal Dominion, fought often side by side with Indra against the Demons, and raised his famous line to the pinnacle of glory and prosperity. Three noble princesses he wedded—of Magadha, Koçala, and Kekaya—with whom he lived in unclouded happiness, save that no son was born to him.

So the years rolled on. One fateful spring, when all the world rejoiced in new beauty, as the warmer Sun dispelled the chill numbness of winter, the King with his Queens went forth to enjoy the pleasures of that season of love. Earth put on her robes of fresh green, and the forest trees budded and blossomed ; the air was filled with the glad hum of bees and the love-notes of birds of varied plumage. Youths and maidens rejoiced in the spring-time of life and snatched the bloom of the fleeting hour, careless of the morrow. Lovers decked their mistresses with fresh flowers, and feasted them with all that was choicest, and the sounds of laughter or the soft murmurs of love were heard throughout the land. The King, having drunk of this cup of pleasure to the full, sought the more manly delights of the Chase, sport of Kings. Through the forests went he with his great bow, rejoicing in his skill and might. Watched by the eager eye of forest-gods, he smote the fierce boars and lions but spared the gentle deer ; breezes fanned his cheek, and great trees lent their shade. But one morning, fresh from his fragrant woodland couch, keen for sport, he heard in the reeds of the sacred river Tamasâ a gurgling sound as of an elephant drinking. In his eagerness he forgot the law forbidding a king to slay an elephant : his arrow is shot ; horrified he hears

a human cry of pain, and bursting through the reeds finds a lad mortally wounded with his water-jar beside him. The boy, adopted son of a saintly Ascetic, is borne by the sorrowing King to his aged parents, and honoured with due funeral rites; and the Hermit lays on the penitent King the heavy weird that his heart too shall in old age be broken by the loss of his son. Meekly the King received the doom, carrying with it the promise of a son yet to be born. He thanked the grieving father, and returned, sorrowful yet in hope, to his home.

(10) But when many years had rolled by, and the King was aged, the Gods, led by Indra, sought—in the fulness of time—from the mighty Vishṇu rest and refuge from the terrible oppression of the Giant-Demon Râvaṇa, the ten-headed King of Lankâ, who had by his penitential austerities won from the Creator (Brahmâ) dominion over the Universe and invulnerability from all superhuman foes. Them the Supreme favourably received, and listened well-pleased to their hymn of praise. They hailed him Omnipotent, All-embracing, the Substance from which all other entities proceed and into which all are reabsorbed. “Passionless art Thou and All-wise, yet grantest to all their desires; Changeless, yet Author of all the vicissitudes of existence; Source of Duty and Law, Lord of Life and Death: Thyself untouched by pain or sin, yet All-pitiful for the sorrows and errors of Thy creatures!” Then Almighty Vishṇu, in a voice that rose above the thunderous roar of Ocean, on which he was seated, promised that He himself, becoming incarnate in the hero-line of Daçaratha, would slay the Oppressor and free Gods and men from his tyranny.

So, at the Sacrifice which Daçaratha was offering, the mighty

God entered the milk of the oblation : this the pious King divided among his three wives, who in due time bore four noble sons—Râma, Bharata, Lakshman, and Çatrughna. And the Princes grew up, trained to all royal virtues and knit together in brotherly love, desired of all mankind, dear before all things to their father.

(11) But, while they were still boys, the Brâhman Kauçika claimed from the King the help of Râma and Lakshman, who were bound together in special love, to guard his sacrifice from assaults of the Demons. So the Princes went with him, welcomed and helped on their way by all nature. The Sage lightened the road with legends of olden time, and sustained them by his magic powers. On the way Râma slew the Demon Târakâ, and at the Saint's hermitage he discomfited the Demon-hosts, shot their leaders, and enabled the Saint to perform his long-obstructed Sacrifice.

Thus having proved their valour, the princes went with Kauçika to a great Sacrifice which the King of Mithilâ had made. On the way favouring portents occurred, heartily were they welcomed, and Râma achieved the adventure of Çiva's Bow by bending and even breaking it—task which had baffled many famous warriors—and so won for his bride lovely Sîtâ, the mysterious daughter of King Janaka. On his invitation Daçaratha came with a gallant army to be present at the marriage, when Râma's brothers also were united to fair brides, and after due festivities he went home with his sons and their newly-wedded wives. But on the way they were terrified by evil omens. The wind was adverse, the sun was darkened, jackals howled : at last appeared awful Paraçu-Râma, with his dreaded axe, sworn foe of the Warrior-Race, whom twenty-one times he had swept from the face of the

earth—beginning the savage deed by slaying his own mother, who belonged to it. He taunted and defied his namesake, whose name and fame were equally a reproach to him; made light of his adventure with Çiva's bow, and offered him his own huge weapon to bend. Râma, to whom as Vishṇu's bow it was familiar, lightly grasped and bent it, smiling the while. But the glory of his foe paled before his, the elder before the later manifestation of the God; he humbled himself, embraced the offer to purchase pardon at the expense of losing that heaven which his arduous austerities had won—and departed, after blessing and praising his Conqueror. Then in joy and triumph Daçaratha and his sons went home, amid the plaudits of the heavenly host rejoicing over Râma.

(12) Then the King, having drunk life's pleasure-cup to the full, prepared (according to the wont of his noble race) to establish Râma on the throne and himself to seek the hermit's cell. All the people rejoiced, but Râma himself grieved. And now the doom long-since pronounced was to overtake the aged King. His wife Kaikeyî, Bharata's mother, who had once saved his life when he was sore wounded, claimed fulfilment of a promise then made her of two boons,—whatsoever she should ask. She demanded the kingdom for her own son Bharata, and the banishment for fourteen years of Râma. The promise was fulfilled: Râma, with his faithful wife and his brother Lakshmaṇ, went into exile; Bharata, against his own will, was seated on the throne; and the aged King, after a short, sad term in the hermitage, passed away. Bharata, after duly performing the funeral-rites, followed Râma, and vainly besought him to return and take up his birthright. But the Hero would not be persuaded,

till the years of his exile should be complete, and to escape further importunity plunged into the great Southern forest. Then began for Râma a series of battles with the Râkshasas, allies and kinsfolk of the Demon-King of Lankâ. He slew Virâdha, who attempted to carry Sîtâ away; and he dreadfully mutilated the terrible Sûrpanakhâ, when she furiously attacked him, frenzied at rejection of her proffered love. She fled for aid to Râvaṇa, and a great host came forth against the two mighty brothers. But Râma slew them with his death-dealing arrows, and only Sûrpanakhâ escaped to tell the tale in Lankâ. Râvaṇa himself then took the field; he decoyed Râma away, and carried off Sîtâ to his island fortress.

Râma disconsolate made alliance with the great Monkey-King Sugrîva, whom he restored to his throne; and whose general, Hanumân, Son of the Wind, discovered and comforted Sîtâ in Lankâ, and brought back tidings to Râma. The Hero then marched south with his allies. By their aid he built a causeway over the strait to Lankâ, and by it he crossed to storm Râvaṇa's capital. A terrible battle was fought before the walls. Apes and Giants performed prodigies of valour. Meghanâda with his deadly lasso was slain, and so was the terrible but slothful Kumbhakarna. Râvaṇa himself came forth to the battle, and nearly slew Lakshmaṇ, when Râma advanced against him, mounted on Indra's war-chariot. The champions encountered; Gods and Giants looked anxiously on while the stupendous duel raged: each put forth his utmost valour against his foe: for long the strife seemed doubtful, and arrows flew thick and fast between them. But at last Râma smashed the Giant's mighty club, smote off his ten heads with unerring arrows,

and laid the Oppressor low. Then was he hailed with shouts of joy by the Gods, and celestial flowers were rained on his head. Sîtâ was recovered, and Fire attested her stainless purity; Vibhîshaṇ, whom happy fate had led to desert his brother Râvaṇa, was crowned in the dead tyrant's stead; and the joyful victor turned his face homewards.

(13) Then he travelled with Sîtâ in the magic car Pushpaka, which moved through the air obedient to his will,—the while he called on her to admire the varied loveliness of sea and land over which they passed. Ocean with its monsters, its foaming waves, its waterspouts; the shore fringed with sombre betel and waving palm-forests; the lofty mountains, crowned with clouds; the cool, dark woods through which he had sought his lost bride; the peaceful hermitages of saintly ascetics:—all he lovingly pointed out to her, telling the story (tender or terrible) of each. And as they drew near the place of their exile, he told her of the grief in which he had sought her, and how mute nature had shared his sorrow and helped his search. At length they reached the noble river Sarâyû, which washes the walls of Ayodhyâ, honoured as divine by Raghu's race, whose banks were studded with the pillars that marked each the completion of some great Sacrifice. There was he met by Bharata and his other brothers, with the Chiefs of his allies. They embraced one another, and rejoiced at their meeting: and Râma, the set term of his exile having now expired, received back the kingdom from loyal, unselfish Bharata, and entered Ayodhyâ in triumph.

(14) First of all the brothers and Sîtâ visited the widowed Queens, to comfort them in their bereavement, and were specially tender to remorseful Kaikeyî. The ceremonies of

consecration and enthronement were observed with unexampled splendour; Râma and Sîtâ entered the city amid the glad acclaims of the whole people, and a reign of peace and prosperity began. Living happily with her Lord, Sîtâ soon gave signs that she was about to become a mother, and the glad King redoubled his tenderness, and readily promised to indulge her wish to revisit the quiet hermitages by the Godâvarî.

Now on a day the King went up on his palace-roof, and his heart swelled within him as he marked the splendour of his city, the richness of her busy marts, the security and happiness of her citizens. He turned to a follower, and asked what the people said of him. The loyal servant answered that in all things they praised him, save for the matter of the Queen—whom he had taken back after long sojourn in Râvaṇa's palace. Struck with horror at the insinuated calumny, after fierce struggle with himself, Râma deemed it his duty to put away his innocent Queen, rather than the cloud of reproach should rest on his line, hitherto stainless. So he summoned his brothers to counsel, told them his decision, and charged Lakshmaṇ to escort Sîtâ to the hermitage of Vâlmîki, and leave her there. None dared to remonstrate, and Lakshmaṇ with heavy heart obeyed. Sîtâ innocently rejoiced at her Lord's kindness, but on the way—as she admired the pleasant scenes and sounds,—unfavourable omens roused her fears, and she prayed for her Lord's welfare. But when on their arrival at the hermitage, Lakshmaṇ told her the dreadful truth, at first she swooned away. Then graciously she forgave him his share in her sorrow, sent loving greetings to all her relations, and tender words of farewell to the King. The blame of her misery she

laid not to his charge, but bewailed it as the punishment for her own sin in a former life ; she promised to endure her sad life until his child should be born, and vowed that then she would devote herself to penance and prayer, that in a future existence they might be reunited for ever. Then Lakshman went back to Ayodhyâ, and Sîtâ entered the hermitage. The trees shed their blossoms, the deer ceased to feed and the peacocks to dance, all in mute sympathy with her. The Poet-Saint Vâlmîki welcomed her to the peace of his dwelling, soothed her sorrows, blamed her husband, and, for her father's sake and her own, blessed her and her future offspring. So the pure Queen lived on in hope and resignation : but Râma in his palace mourned her, and devoted himself solely to the duties of his rank, joy having passed from his life.

(15) Thus Râma all lonely ruled the world. Now there came from Yamunâ's banks hermits to seek help against the Râkshasa Lavaṇa, who troubled their sacrifices. The king gave them as their champion his younger brother Çatrughna, who after a terrible fight slew the Giant and returned in triumph to Ayodhyâ. But on his homeward way he stopped at Vâlmîki's hermitage, and that same night Sîtâ gave birth to twin sons, Kuça and Lava. These the Poet-Saint brought up, performing for them all religious rites, and teaching them the sweet strains of the Epic of their father, which he himself had made (*Râmâyana*). Then did Çatrughna found the noble city of Mathurâ, after which he returned to Râma's court, where he was lovingly received, and where he told all his story, save the birth of Sîtâ's sons, which the Saint had forbidden him to tell.

Now there came to Râma's palace a Brâhman, weeping for his son who had died untimely, and reproaching the King.

Râma, all-pitiful, promised him relief, and set out on his celestial chariot to compel Death to restore his prey. But a warning voice told him as he started that first he must root out a grievous sin which was being committed in the land. This he found to be a Çûdra, who was seeking to win Heaven by the practice of severe austerities, a thing forbidden by the Law to his degraded order. The King slew him with his own hand, and by that happy death the sin was wiped away and the sinner passed to Heaven. Then Râma returned, found the Brâhman rejoicing over his son restored to life, and received his grateful blessings.

Râma now prepared to celebrate with extraordinary splendour the great Horse-sacrifice. To it came all the great Saints, gathering from the regions of Earth and Heaven; and the Râkshasas, formerly disturbers, were now guardians of the rites! With the rest came Vâlmîki, at whose command Kuça and Lava went singing before the King and the people, melting them to tears when they heard the sweet story of Râma in the Poet's matchless verse. Then were his sons made known to Râma, and the Saint craved as a boon that he should take back his own true wife. Sîtâ, summoned by the Saint, came forward, and solemnly prayed that Earth would proclaim her stainless and receive her to her bosom. A chasm opened, Earth appeared in glorious form, clasped her pure daughter to her breast, and vanished. The King was hardly restrained from a vain attempt to recover her, but at length submitted to Fate's decree.

Râma, having established his brothers' sons in separate kingdoms, now prepared for the end. Death himself came with a summons from the Supreme, and the Divine Hero returned to the repose of that eternity which he had quitted

for a time, to deliver Gods and men from Râvaṇa's tyranny. And when he departed, there followed him in one mighty stream the dwellers in Ayodhyâ; and his faithful allies, the Râkshasas and Monkeys, bitterly bewailed his loss.

(16) The sons of Râma and his brothers ruled their various realms in harmony, the chief rank being given to Kuṣa, who dwelt in Kuṣâvatî. But one night, when all the palace was still, he woke from sleep, to see in his chamber the guardian goddess of his ancestral capital, Ayodhyâ, clad as a mourning bride, who besought him to return to her. She bewailed the desolation of her streets and palaces, where jackals howled and spiders spread their webs; of the painted halls, where now fierce lions lurked; of the pleasant gardens, fallen a prey to apes; of the river-banks, where once fair women bathed and now wild buffaloes wallowed. Her houses were fallen into decay, grass grew on the roofs, and no fires burned on the hearths. So the King promised to return to her, his ministers approved, and on a propitious day he set out. His host was like a moving city, with its multitude of chariots and horses, its mountainous elephants, its forest of flagstaves. He crossed Ganges, adoring the sacred stream, and came to Sarâyû, hard by his own city. He restored the buildings, worshipped the Gods in their temples, and established himself in the ancient capital of his race.

Then came the grievous heats of summer, when scarcely even the rich could escape from misery. The King with all the ladies of the palace went forth to bathe in the cool water of Sarâyû. There they played, delighting in the pleasant cold, splashing one another and the King, floating and dancing, displaying all their charms. But when the King left the water, he found he had lost a precious bracelet, the

gift of his father Râma. Fishermen searched the river, but in vain. They told the monarch of a Serpent-King who dwelt below the water, and had perhaps stolen it. Armed with his bow the King repaired to the bank, when at once there appeared the Nâga, with his fair sister Kumudvatî, who when playing at ball had seized the glittering bracelet as it fell. The bracelet was restored, and the appeased Kuça took Kumudvatî to wife, thus forming an alliance auspicious to the Worlds.

(17) To Kuça Kumudvatî bore a son Atithi, whom his father trained in all noble nurture ere he fell in battle with a Demon; Kumudvatî followed him in death, and Atithi reigned in his stead. Him did Brâhmans and ministers unite to consecrate King, stablishing him on an ivory throne in a new-built palace. When duly anointed he lavished gifts on the priests and set all his captives free. Fair in form, by his beauty and winning ways he made all hearts his own; his royal state was as Vishṇu's, his palace a second Paradise. Pious to the Gods, terrible in war, careful and just in administration, was he—and his kingdom flourished. Truthful and generous, resisting all temptation, trampling on the allurements of sense, tempering severity with mercy, he struck the roots of his Kingship deep in the hearts of his subjects. Carefully dividing his time, he daily held his council and watched both friends and foes. Boldly he attacked, but guarded his own realm well; nor by over-confidence did he put himself in the power of any. Riches he gathered as reserve of power and fostered his army therewith; commerce he protected, and religion; using power or policy as best served. Mighty, generous, modest—all bowed before his throne; his subjects adored, and the Gods favoured him.

(18) To him his Queen, Nishada's princess, bore a famous son, Nishâdha, who sat on the throne when Atithi passed to heaven. When Nishâdha's glorious rule was ended fiery Nala reigned, and after him mild, virtuous Pundarîka. Then valiant Devânîka came and after him magnanimous Ahînagas—lofty-souled, skilled to discern the thoughts of men. Next Çîla succeeded, and Kuça and Unnâbha; Vajranâbha, Çankhana, Dhushitâçva, Viçvasaha, Hiranyanâbha, pleasant Kauçalya, mighty Putra, Paushya, and peaceful Dhruvasandhi—Polar Star among Kings, slain untimely in the chase.

But when Dhruvasandhi died his son Sudarçana was but a child. Him the council installed, prince of high promise and mighty heart, whose dignity and grace delighted his people. Kings bowed before him, eloquent of speech, and earth rested in peace under the shadow of his boyish arm. Apt was he to learn, soon mastering the arts of wisdom and war; and when he grew to man's estate he wedded a lovely bride who bore him a fair son, Agnivarma.

(19) Now when Prince Agnivarma was of age, his father placed him on the throne, and himself retired to the hermit's cell. For some few years Agnivarma endured the cares of royalty; but then, fearing no foreign foes, he gave himself up entirely to sensual pleasure, nor recked of his people's welfare. Wasting his life in ignoble pursuits, lavishing his strength in vicious indulgence, heeding no counsel—he consumed away before his time, unblest with offspring. But his sage ministers, hastily and secretly performing his obsequies, honoured the widowed Queen as regent and performed the ceremonies of inauguration for her unborn son.

(So abruptly closes the Poem in its present state.)

NOTES MYTHOLOGICAL AND EXPLANATORY

IN orthodox Hindu cosmogony Brahma is the Supreme Soul. All that exists proceeds from Him. In Him exists no will nor anything that (to human apprehension) indicates *soul*. But at determined periods—Kalpas—Brahma becomes energetic in the forms of the three Supreme Gods of Hindu mythology—Brahmâ, Vishṇu, and Çiva. At the end of these world-periods, whatsoever exists—Gods, men, all living creatures, and all matter—is reabsorbed in Brahma, who goes to sleep again for an equal period. But the object of each individual soul is to free itself from the chain of births within the world-age and be reabsorbed in Brahma, so losing individual being and responsibility. In our poem Vishṇu is identified, and made co-extensive with Brahma.

The function of Brahmâ, performed either directly, or through the Prajâpatis, “fathers of living souls,” ends with creation, except that He is represented as granting the boons won by asceticism. To him therefore no altars rise and no worship is paid. Vishṇu, the Preserver, is the chief God of adoration in the world, and to him incarnate as Râma the whole poem looks. Nine times has he been incarnate in the current World-Age—a period of stupendous length, 430,000,000,000 years for a Day of Brahma, divided into four

Ages, of which each is less long and more vicious than that which preceded it, gradually sinking from primeval goodness : and a tenth Descent in human form (Avatâr) remains to come, before all shall be reabsorbed, and the Divine shall go to sleep again.

Vishṇu's first four incarnations or Descents (Avatârs) took place in the first, the most perfect, Age ; the three that succeeded, of which the last was the divine Hero of our poem, in the second ; the eighth and most complete, Krishṇa, in the third Age ; whilst the last and most evil, and also the shortest, boasts of two, the Buddha and Kalki, who is yet to come. Each of the four Ages, corresponding in some sort to the Golden, Silver, Copper, and Iron Ages of Classic Mythology, is preceded and succeeded by a "twilight" equal in length to one-tenth of the period to which it belongs. But of what happens during these minor periods of rest we know nothing. In each succeeding Age the Great Sages, usually reckoned as Seven and sometimes identified with the stars of the Great Bear, come again into being and activity ; apparently they live through the World-Age, as does Vaçishṭha, the great spiritual Director (Guru) of Ikshvâku's line, Ikshvâku being himself the son of Manu, the seventh of the great succession of Manus, of whom Hindu mythological chronology numbers fourteen.

This seventh Manu has the Sun for his father, and is himself the progenitor of the mighty Solar line of Kings. A Manu presides throughout the whole of a Kalpa or Great Yuga, which is thence called also a Manu-period or Manvantara.

Until the individual soul by pious meditation and abstraction frees itself from the chain of individuality, it remains subject to the laws of transmigration, and is born in successive states

of existence—higher or lower, happy or miserable, according to the deeds done in the body. These previous births constitute Fate, as determining the course of life in subsequent existences.

In the human sphere the Creator placed on earth four orders of men—Brâhmans, Kshatriyas, Vaiçyas, and Çûdras : Priests, Warriors, Husbandmen, Slaves. The three former are bound by common rites and duties, admitted to common privileges ; but the last is a slave, and may not attempt to rise higher. On the other hand, it will be seen that whereas the earlier Râma is a Brâhman, the second (and mightier) is a Kshatriya ; and the Mythology tells of more than one Vaiçya, who was both Saint and King. Throughout the poem the extraordinary supremacy of the Brâhman is insisted on. Gods and Kings alike tremble before his curse, and alike seek his aid against calamity. The chief duty of Kings and heroes is to protect the Brâhmans in the performance of their sacrifices, and Râvaṇa's guilt lies at least as much in his obstruction of their rites as in his oppression of the worlds.

Now, while men are on earth, their lives are by Brahmanical rule divided into four stages—those of student, householder, recluse, and ascetic : in the poem the last two seem to merge into one. It was the duty of a boy of the three upper classes to spend the years between childhood and maturity in the study of the Vedas and other sacred lore : when perfect therein he was permitted *and was bound* to marry and have a household of his own. When he had a son to carry on his line, he was free to consult his own future happiness by withdrawing himself from the world, and by meditation on the Supreme fitting himself for that union with Brahma which is the final goal. But most awful consequences awaited the

man who had left no son to succeed him : the ghosts of his ancestors would be in misery : and he himself could never escape from the dread round of transmigration. (This is how the matter is presented to us, though if the ancestors in succession had attained—as Raghu's line did—to union with Brahma, one does not see how they could be affected by failure of the line ; cf. III. 26. It may be noticed too that the expedient of adoption is not contemplated.)

Inferior to the three Great Gods are many less mighty, in their origin elemental,—of whom the chief is Indra, the thundering god of the sky, who has won his place by performing a hundred sacrifices, and may be supplanted by any one who does the like (see C. III.) Indra too has been the champion of the Gods against the Demons, and he has drunk the Nectar produced by the Churning of Ocean with Mount Mandara for the churning-stick, which gave the gods strength to overcome their foes. He has a hundred eyes, drives seven bay horses, and is lord of the thunder ; the rainbow is his bow, and he clipped the wings of the mountains when they threatened heaven in their flight. His wife is Çachî, his son Jayanta, and his special heaven Svarga, on Mount Meru ; his followers are the Maruts or wind-gods. According to one legend Vishṇu is his younger brother, both being sons of Aditi. Agni is god of fire ; Yama, of death and of justice ; Kuvera, of wealth, his followers being the Yakshas, his home (and Vishṇu's) Kailâsa ; lastly, Varuṇa, of the waters.

In the earthly life each individual in his student-stage chooses as preceptor in Sacred Lore a Brâhman, his Guru, whom he is bound to venerate far beyond his natural father, and to whom he would seek on all occasions of special need. Such is Vaçishṭha to the whole Sun-descended Kingly line.

The Brâhmans, as we find them in the poem, live for the most part in little separate communities, in groves by sacred rivers, where they perform their sacrifices and lead holy, peaceful lives. They have their wives and children about them, live in huts, and wear robes of bark; their enemies the Râkshasas trouble their rites; and when Kings have solemn festivals—births, marriages, funerals, or other solemnities—they gather to them, and are graced with rich gifts.

The Râkshasas are spirits of evil. Of terrible aspect, feasting on raw flesh, delighting in darkness, able to assume varied shapes at will, they trouble the holy rites of the pious. Their King was Râvaṇa, whose brother was Kumbhakarṇa, his son Meghaṇâda or Indrajit, slain by Lakshmaṇ, his sister Sûrpanakhâ.

A King is imaged as having wedded the Earth, loving and protecting his realm as a bridegroom his bride. Also, Royal State is represented as his bride, the Fortune or Luck of the Kingdom; sometimes she is figured as jealous of his human bride (as of Sîtâ). The special insignia of royalty are the umbrella and the yâk-tail whisks or fans (Châmarî). When the heir comes to manhood, he is usually installed as Yuva-râja or associate-King.

The elephant is a favourite subject of comparison, for dignity and strength, and also for the peculiar sweet-scented liquid that exudes from his temples in the season of love-passion (*mada*). Among plants the lotus or water-lily takes chief place,—for its two species, distinguished by the fact that the one opens up to the rays of the moon and closes during the day, while the other expands to the sun and remains closed at night. There is frequent allusion also to the phosphores-

cent plants, specially flourishing on Himâlaya, which shine through the darkness as though the setting sun had left his light with them.

Fire is thought specially pure ; it ministers at the sacrifice, and pervades all nature, abiding even in the sea (which, perhaps, is its phosphorescence). The dead are consumed on the pyre, but perfect ascetics are buried : and Râma also buries the Râkshasas.

The Law under which all are set is the Code of the first Manu, —divine progenitor of the whole human race. This Code was revealed by Bhṛigu, son of the Creator, and is a *Smṛiti* or derivative sacred book, the authority on which it rests being the *Çruti*, or *Heard* Revelation,—the Veda. That Code, which in its present form was probably composed in the third century A.D., is a mine of information on the orthodox Brahmanical system. The perfect King orders himself by Manu's precepts, the cosmogony of the poem is his, and his, above all, is the exalted position of the Brâhman, whether as Preceptor (Guru), Sacrificer, Ascetic, or Counsellor. From his Law-book too are derived the ceremonies which consecrate the royal children, and the studies that fit them for their high position. There also are found the rules that regulate the solemn ceremonies of the *Çrâddha*, those sacrifices to departed Ancestors that were so imperatively incumbent on every Hindu, and the duty of which made a son the object of such fervent desire. [These sacrifices to the spirits of the dead probably point to an earlier stage of belief than most which we find prevailing among Hindus.]

As three of Vishṇu's incarnations are prominently brought before us in the poem, it may be interesting to give a catalogue of them all.

- 1st. The Fish—when he saved Manu and the seven Ṛishis in the great Deluge, and rescued the Vedas from destruction (*cf.* XIII. 20).
- 2nd. The Tortoise—when in that form he allowed the gods to pivot on his back the Mountain Mandara, with which they churned the Ocean to obtain the Nectar to strengthen them against the Demons (Asuras).
- 3rd. The Boar—when on his mighty tusk he raised up the solid earth above the waste of waters.
- 4th. The Man-lion—when he tore to pieces the Demon Hiranyakaçipu, who was oppressing the world, in defence of his son Prahlâda, a devout worshipper of Viṣṇu.
- 5th. The Dwarf—who saved the world from the tyranny of Bali. Approaching him at the end of a great sacrifice, he obtained as a boon the grant of as much space as he could cover in three strides ; then rising to his own Divine proportions, with the first stride he covered earth, with the second heaven (*cf.* XVI., “Viṣṇu’s second stride”), and with the third he crushed Bali down to Pâtâla, the region of semi-divine snakes below the earth.
- 6th. Râma with the Axe, Paraçu-Râma, son of Jamadagni, descended from Bhṛigu (hence *Bhârgava*). He came to earth to deliver from the Demon Arjuna, King of the Haihayas, who provoked his death at Râma’s hands by stealing his father’s cow. Arjuna’s death was avenged by his sons on Jamadagni, and

then did Râma in his fury, twenty-one times in succession, sweep away the generations of the Warrior Class. In obedience to his father he had already slain his own mother Renukâ, for having entertained impure thoughts. But when his father, delighted at his obedience, granted him whatever he should ask, he obtained her restoration to life and pristine purity, the revocation of curses laid on his brothers, and for himself the highest renown as a warrior.

- 7th. Râma Chandra—the Râma of our poem, incarnate for the destruction of Râvaṇa.
- 8th. Krishṇa—the most popular form of all Vishṇu's earthly manifestations. In him the whole God is said to have come down, whereas in the others He came only in part. Krishṇa is the Divine Hero of the Mahâbhârata, as Râma is of the Râmâyana. He was born in a humble home, for the destruction of Çiçupâla. His worship is the most widespread of any in India at the present day, and the god is a compound (one may say) of Hercules and Cupid.
- 9th. Gautama the Buddha—though this is by no means undisputed. This manifestation is said to have been made to restore religion to pristine purity. The inclusion of the arch-heretic among the Avatârs of Vishṇu is a masterpiece of Brahmanical craft.
- 10th, and last, is the Descent of Vishṇu as Kalki, which is still to come, when the earth—at length full of all evil and lawlessness—is to be restored for a while to primeval innocence, before the end of the Age and the Great Dissolution (Mahâ-Pralaya).

Vishṇu's special weapon is the Quoit (Chakra) ; he rides on Garuḍa, King of birds, foe of snakes, his constant attendant ; he wears the jewel Kaustubha, won from Ocean at its Churning, and his breast is marked by a sacred curl, the Çrivatsa. His wife is Lakshmî, and in the intervals of his activity he slumbers on the waters seated on a lotus.

The Svayamvara, the maiden's choice of her bridegroom, is a great feature in both Sanskrit Epics—those of Sîtâ and Indumatî in the story of Râma, and of Draupadî in the Mahâbhârata. It points to a freedom of choice by the women of India which has now been curtailed or abolished, probably through the influence of Mohammedan modes of thought.

Mount Himâlaya has a divine character. From his slopes comes the sacred Gangâ, and on his peaks did the god Çiva perform his arduous austerities. His daughter was Umâ, specially Pârvatî, daughter of the mountain, who by her austerities won the love of Çiva and became thereby the mother of Kârtikeya (so called from his six nurses, the Kṛitikâs, now the Pleiades in heaven), born among the reeds of Skanda—leader of the armies of the gods. [See the *Kumârasambhava*.] She is invoked with Çiva at the beginning of the poem.

For the ordinary daily sacrifice were needed—1st, the butter-oblation, *havis* (ghî)—clarified butter—laid on the holy fire ; 2nd, the *Kuça* grass, a scented grass still much esteemed in India,—*Khas-Khas*.

The greatest of all sacrifices was that of the Horse—the Açvamedha—being the final one of a series of a hundred, the accomplishing of which would raise the sacrificer to the rank of Indra. For this final sacrifice it was necessary that the horse chosen as the victim should have been free to range

where he would for a full year before he was offered up. So was the victim carried off by Çiva, when Sagara tried to complete his series of sacrifices, and so also by Indra when Dilîpa attempted it,—and Raghu attacked the god. (C. III.).

Çiva, the third of the Great Gods, is the Destroyer. With five heads, and in the principal one three eyes, he rides—clothed with a tiger-skin—on the bull Nandi. He wields the Trident and a mighty bow, bears on his brow the crescent moon; his neck is blue from the effect of drinking the poison produced at Ocean's Churning; and on his breast hangs a chaplet of human skulls. In one of his life-stages his wife was Satî, one of the daughters of Daksha. But Daksha slighted both by not inviting them to a great sacrifice he made. Satî in wrath leaped into the altar-fire and destroyed the ceremony, and Çiva with a flash from his terrible central eye smote off Daksha's head; but afterwards relented and replaced it with that of a ram.

His two most famous achievements are:—

1st. When the Ganges was to descend to earth from heaven to purify from sin the ashes of the sons of Sagara, he broke its fall with his head, lest it should overwhelm the earth. It wandered for a thousand years among his matted locks before its final descent to earth.

2nd. While he was engaged in severe austerities on Mount Himâlaya, Kâma, god of love (sent by the Gods), archer of the flowery bow, attempted to awake passion in his breast, that he might beget a son to lead the hosts of heaven, whereupon the angry God reduced him to ashes with one flash of his terrible eye. Hence Kâma is called (Ananga) Bodiless, —though at last, yielding to the prayers of Rati, his wife, and of the Gods, Çiva gave him a body again. The story is told

at length by Kâlidâsa in the *Kumârasambhava* ("Birth of the War-God"). It is an unending source of allusion and metaphor throughout Sanskrit poetry, especially in combination with beautiful descriptions of Spring, the gladsome season of love.

Gangâ was the daughter of Mount Himâlaya, and originally flowed only in heaven. But King Sagara having by austerities gained by one wife one son, and by the other 60,000,—prepared for the great Horse-sacrifice. When all was ready, the victim was stolen away by Çiva in guise of a monstrous snake. The 60,000 dug down through earth, enlarging the bounds of Ocean, hence called Sâgara, and were reduced to ashes by the angry God when they found him in Pâtâla. Their half-brother renewed the quest, and found the ashes. Garuḍa, Viṣṇu's bird, told him from that God that the ashes could be purified only by the waters of heavenly Ganges. For four generations did Sagara and his descendants practise severe austerities to bring the river down. Then at last the Creator allowed the descent, and Çiva broke the fall. The mighty river, still—however—flowing also in heaven, descended in seven streams upon the earth, and flows also through the gloomy realms of Pâtâla, home of the Nâgas, or semi-divine snakes. On earth it bears the name of Bhâgîrathî, daughter of the saintly King, whose severe asceticism won the grace of her descent; but also by the name of "Jahnu's daughter," having been swallowed by Jahnu in his anger, and again released. Her pure waters washed the ashes of Sagara's sons, and they mounted to heaven. One legend makes the river proceed from Viṣṇu's foot (*cf.* x. 38). Sagara was one of the earliest Kings of the Solar line (*cf.* XIII.). Kakutṣtha was grandson of Ikshvâku, and his name—"rider on the

hump"—was derived from his riding in battle against the Asuras on Indra himself in the form of a bull. It will be found that the strife between the gods and their enemies, Daityas, Asuras, Râkshasas, is never-ending, still-beginning.

Agastya, tutelary Saint of the southern region, and in heaven the star Canopus, led in Râma's age a hermit's life. He was born in a Jar. When Mount Vindhya aspired to eclipse Himâlaya in height, the Saint prevailed on him to bow to let him pass southward and so remain till his return—which never took place. Hence Vindhya's inferior height.

The Churning of Ocean was undertaken by the gods by Vishṇu's command, to recover various precious things that had been lost, and to obtain the draught of immortality (Amṛita). The churning was done with Mount Mandara for the churning-stick, the Serpent Vâṣukî for the rope, Vishṇu himself as the Tortoise for the pivot. Then were produced—Surabhi, the Holy Cow; Vârunî, goddess of Wine; Pârijâta, the Celestial wishing-tree, glory of Indra's heaven; the Apsarases, Nymphs of exquisite loveliness; Lakshmi, goddess of beauty; Vishṇu's precious jewel, Kaustubha; Dhanvantari, the Hindu Æsculapius; the Moon; the deadly Halâhala poison; and last of all, the precious Amṛita, by drinking which the Gods became immortal, and with resistless might smote the Demons. The Dragon Râhu managed to steal some drops, and, becoming immortal, thenceforward periodically swallowed the sun and moon, so causing eclipses. (But the true theory is given in xiv. 159.)

The three mental qualities so often alluded to are Truth or Virtue, Passion, Ignorance. The perfect sage must have his senses completely subdued, and be dead to all disturbing emotion. Asceticism is in itself meritorious, independently

of any purpose to be served by it. So the great Gods are described as engaging in it, and one of Vishṇu's titles is the Great Ascetic. Çiva's austerities have been already referred to, and Brahmâ engaged in them before the work of Creation.

In connection with the supreme power and authority of the Brâhmans, in seeming contradiction of their passionless character, it will be noted that, as their blessings are most potent for good, so their curses—of which they are not sparing—are the most awful engines of evil.

For a handy and accurate account of the mythology, religion, and modes of thought and life in Ancient India, no book is better than Sir Monier-Williams's *Indian Wisdom*. His *Indian Epic Poetry* gives an excellent analysis of both the Râmâyana and Mahâbhârata. Dowson's *Dictionary of Hindu Mythology* is also very useful. The great source, however, for English readers is still Wilson's translation of the *Vishṇu Purâṇa*. Professor Macdonnell, of Oxford, has lately published a short but excellent *History of Sanskrit Literature*, which should be consulted.

NOTE ON PRONUNCIATION

SANSKRIT names I have tried to transliterate, without losing sight of scientific accuracy, so as to enable ordinary readers to pronounce them correctly. Scholars are, however, unhappily not yet agreed upon a uniform system: that which I adopt is almost exactly what is known as the "Modified Jonesian," the official system of the Government of India.

Vowels, speaking generally, are to be pronounced as in Italian, consonants as in English; the aspirate (*h*), however, preserves its own sound when combined with other consonants, except *ch* and *sh*, which are sounded as in English.

The following table will sufficiently explain any peculiarities:—

a	is pronounced as	u	in	<i>but</i>
â	,,	a	,,	<i>father</i>
e	,,	ay	,,	<i>pay</i>
i	,,	i	,,	<i>bit</i>
î	,,	ee	,,	<i>feet</i>
o	,,	o	,,	<i>over</i>
u	,,	oo	,,	<i>foot</i>
û	,,	oo	,,	<i>food</i>
ai	,,	ai	,,	<i>aisle</i>
au	,,	ou	,,	<i>cloud</i>

CONSONANTS

Ç represents a modified *s*, hardly distinguishable from *sh*, and both are pronounced as *sh* in *she*.

Ch is pronounced as in *choose*.

G is always *hard*, as in *game*, *get*, etc.

Bh, Gh, Kh, Dh, Th, etc., are aspirated sounds as in *cab-horse*, *log-hut*, *blockhouse*, *madhouse*, *hothouse*, etc.

Y is always a consonant, as in *yoke*.

Dots below consonants are significant to the scholar, but the slight difference in sound between dotted and plain consonants the ordinary reader may neglect.

CANTO I

How King Dilîpa went to Vaçishtha's Hermitage.

THE Lord Supreme and Pârvatî I praise,
The parents of all worlds, close-joined in one
As word with sense, and pray for gift of speech
With mighty meaning fraught. How else could I,
Weak-witted, dare to hymn the Kingly race
Descended from the Sun,—daring not less
Than one who ventures on a raft to cross
Some pathless sea? For, dullard though I am,
I seek a poet's fame, and risk men's jeers,
A dwarf who stretches tiny arms to grasp
Fruit hung well-nigh beyond a giant's reach.

10

Yet Bards of old have entered, haply I
May follow: where a diamond shows the way,
A thread may go,—yea, pass through hardest gem.

So Raghu's line I sing,—pure from their birth,
Who till they won success worked on, and ruled
Earth to the Sea: their car-track reached to Heav'n.
The altar-fire they tended, suppliants all
Most fully satisfied, ill-deeds with stripes

They punished,—nor were slothful in their rule. 20
 Wealth they amassed to scatter ; sparing words,
 Ne'er spake they falsely ; fame in war they sought,
 Not gain,—and wedded love for noble seed.
 Their children studied, gravely youth pursued
 Its decent pleasures, and in ripe old age
 Ascetic lived they,—till through pious thought
 At length they passed to win the Bliss Supreme.
 Me, poor of words and foolish, has their fame
 That sounded through the worlds late moved to write :—
 May wise men hear ! for in their judgment lies 30
 Or fame or shame, as fire parts gold from dross.

First King was Manu, whom the Sun begot,
 Wise, reverend, as the Holiest Word begins
 The sacred Hymns. In that unspotted line
 Dilîpa purer sprang,—'mong Kings a Moon,
 As in the Milky Ocean Soma rose.
 Broad-chested, tall as Çâl-tree, as a bull
 Wide-shouldered, long of arm, the Warrior-race
 He seemed embodied, fit for famous deeds.
 All-glorious, all-surpassing, he bestrode— 40
 Like Meru's self—the Earth. His vigorous mind
 Matched with his beauty, while his Holy Lore
 Was equal with them : valour and success
 Were twinned : and still his Kingly virtues made
 Him to his foes a terror, but his folk
 Loved him and honoured,—as the Sea yields pearls

Yet nurtures monstrous births. He held the path
That Manu traced, no hair's-breadth strayed his folk
From that pure model. Save to guard the realm,
No tax was taken : so the Sun derives 50
From earth that moisture which a thousandfold
He soon gives back in rain. His armed host
Was escort only for the King, who used
Two arms alone in war, his insight keen
In Holy Lore, and bow well-strung. Mankind
Knew his deep purpose when it came to fruit,
Not sooner : fathomless his mind and ways :—
So here we reap the fruit of former lives !

Fearless himself he guarded, duty's path
He strictly followed, wealth he stored, nor grudged 60
To spend that wealth, and unenthralled enjoyed
His royal pleasures : wise, he spared his words,—
Mighty yet patient, generous secretly,
Opposèd virtues seemed in him twin-born.
By sense unshackled, straining Brahma-wards,
By duty curbed he pleasure,—that his age
Brought no decay. For nurture, maintenance,
And for protection looked his folk to him ;
Their parents gave life only. So the King
Repressed the sinful, held the world upright, 70
Loved virtue, wedded for the Fathers' sake,
Kept righteous ways. As Indra doth for corn,
He drew from Earth her wealth for Sacrifice,—
And both alternate mildly ruled the Worlds.

His glory other Kings despaired to reach,
 For theft, ungrasping, lived in name alone.
 A worthy foe he honoured, as one sick
 Loves healing bitters ; friends unworthy proved
 Like hand snake-bitten did the King cast off.
 Him the Creator formed of choicest seed,
 To rear for men rich crop of good ; alone
 He reigned o'er Earth, sea-moated, girdled round
 By Ocean-ramparts, like a single town.

80

Sudakshiṇâ his Queen, whose lucky name
 Proclaimed her virtues, shared his pious home,
 As Dakshâ pure ; in whom her royal spouse
 Delighted chiefly, loving her and Earth
 Before all other. Yet the noble pair
 Were still unblest with offspring, and the King
 Longed, and was weary, and well-nigh lost hope.

90

So, bent on Sacrifice to win a son,
 The Kingdom's weight now casting off, the King,
 Pure, with his consort, after prayer and fast,
 Sought sage Vaçishṭha, lord of Saintly Lore,
 As in the rains one cloud Airâvata
 And lightning mount, deep-rumbling, so that pair
 One chariot mounted, whom a modest train
 Attended,—“lest the Hermits be disturbed,”—
 Their glory like a host encircling them.
 Scented with Çâl-tree gums a pleasant breeze,

100

That shook the forest, bearing fragrant dust
Of flowers, followed : and a deep, sweet cry
Was raised by peacocks, as the car swept past.
Amazed the deer looked up, and left the path
As on the chariot rolled ; their love-filled eyes
Were on them bent,—that pair so like themselves.
Anon they watched the cranes, that overhead
Flew tuneful, arching o'er the gate of Heav'n,
Unpillar'd, while the favouring breeze foretold
Success, and kept unsoiled both robes and hair. 110
Pale lilies' perfume, fragrant as their breath,
They savoured, from the tanks which rippling waves
Cooled ever. Priests, from wayside villages
Themselves had founded, blessed the Royal pair,
Rich from their bounty, where the altars rose.
Butter of kine received they, herdsmen grey
With kindly greeting questioned, asking them
The names of shady trees that lined the roads.
Untold their glory, pure their hearts and robes,
As through the sky speed Chitrâ and the Moon 120
They sped delighted, while the smiling King
This pointed out and that,—nor knew the way
Was ending, ere they reached the Sage's grove.
He checked the horses, handed forth his Queen,
And nobly courteous led her to their Host.

Now from the neighbouring woods, with grass and fruit
And store of fuel, Sainly bands came home,—

Met by the Sacred Fire, unseen ; the deer
 Thronged round the huts, and ate the allotted rice ;
 Sweet maidens filled the trenches, where the birds 130
 Unfearing drank ; then couched the timid roes
 Where rice was heaped at eve, and chewed the cud.

Wind-shaken now the rising altar-smoke,
 With butter fed, made pure the attentive guests
 Around the Hermitage. That noble pair,
 Alighting meekly, sought the Ascetic's home.
 Then hailed the Saintly tribe their pious Lord
 With worthy honour, grave in self-control,
 Receiving him. When evening rites were o'er,
 He saw the Sage supreme : close at his side 140
 Arundhatî was seated : and the Saint
 Shone like the Sacred Fire, like Svâhâ she.
 The Royal pair saluting clasped their feet,
 And lovingly with blessings were received.
 Then, after rest and food, the glorious Saint
 Asked of the Ascetic King how fared his realm,
 And how himself. The patient Conqueror
 Returned grave answer, speaking all his mind
 Before the Saint, high Lord of Sacred Spells :—

“All ways my Kingdom prospers, holy Sage ! 150
 Whom thou protectest neither Gods nor men
 Can harm : thy Holy spells defeat far off
 The foe malignant, while my feebler shafts
 Smite those I see, superfluous ; and the rain
 Abundant cheers the drought-consumèd corn,—

Bred by thy Sacred rites ; my subjects live
To man's full age, nor fear nor pain disturbs
Their happy lives :—all this we owe to thee.
Deep-rooted, flawless, is my prosp'rous state,
For thou art ever watching, Brahmâ's child !

160

“ Yet, O my Father, I myself, and this
My Queen, thy daughter, bowed with sorrow, long,
And vainly long, for offspring ; and the Earth,
Sea-girdled, rich in gems, delights me not.
The Fathers of my race, whom funeral cakes
Delight, foresee a failing of the rite,
And mourn my fate, the while with tears they fowl
Drink-offerings poured by me, their sonless son.
Thus pure by sacrifice, my eyes are dim
For longing, childless,—as the mountain-peak
Half sunlit, half in shade, my glory dimmed !

170

“ By gifts, and self-control, and holy life,
May Heav'n be won, but sons of noble line
Are blessings here and yonder, O my Guide !
Does not my childless state distress thy heart,
As 'twere a tree thou plantedst fruitless, bare ?
Three debts men owe :—this last alone, unpaid,
Torments me, as a shackle binds and pains
The lordly elephant : Oh, help me then,
Father, Protector, Stay of Manu's line !
And teach me how at length to pay this debt !”

180

One moment only sank the Priest in thought,

Like lake that slumbers, having heard the King.
To pious thought the hindrance stood revealed,
And thus the mighty Saint made grave reply :—

“Of yore returning home from Indra’s courts,
By Pârijâta passing, where the Cow
Surabhi rested in the grateful shade,
To her by thee due reverence was not paid,
As fearing to neglect thy loving Queen.

190

Then was the curse of childlessness pronounced,
Till by submission thou shouldst purge thy sin !
But Gangâ roared, where heavenly monsters plunged,
And so her curse was all unheard by thee.

Hence is thy sin thy scourge ; as Sages teach,
Scorn of the worthy works the scorner woe.

Now in Pâtâla, where the gates are barred
By mighty snakes, she helps a royal rite
For bless’d Prachetas. Therefore, O my King,
With due observance tend her holy Calf,
Pure-living, with thy Queen, that so, well-pleased,
She may bestow the priceless boon ye seek !”

200

Even as he spake, came Nandinî, the Cow
That gave the oblation, faultless, from the wood,
In tender, tawny lustre, like a leaf
All fresh, with arching eyebrow of white hair,
Like crescent on night’s brows :—the streaming milk
Flowed now in holy flood to feed her calf.

Then said the Saint, who knew Fate’s course, and knew
The King should prosper :—“See, this fruitful Cow

210

Comes here unprompted : so shall thy success
Surprise thee ; hear my loving counsel then !
Attend her ever as she roams the woods,—
As Study follows Knowledge : while she walks,
Walk thou ; she standing, stand ; she couching, sit ;
She drinking, drink :—at dawn of day, thy Spouse,
Fasting, with close observance must attend
Her to the forest's edge, and thence at eve
Receive her coming home. So shall her grace
By constancy be won, and thou shalt stand,
Proud Father, Sire of Princely sons, and chief
Of Royal fathers !”

220

Then the grateful King
Bowed docile, with his Queen, and both retired.

Night fell : and Brahmâ's son, the eloquent
And true, dismissed to sleep the pious King,
For whom success was dawning ; well he could
Bestow the boon, but knew that grace divine
Is hard to win, nor won save after toil.

He gave him but a rustic hut, and there
The Queen reposed, where fragrant grass was spread,— 230
While saintly students passed all night in prayer.

CANTO II

Nandinî grants the King his Desire.

WHEN morning broke, the King, in glory rich,
Rose, loosed the Cow, and—when her calf had drunk—
Again secured it. Next the gracious Queen
With wreaths and perfumes honoured Nandinî.
Then turned they to the forest, and the Cow
Their way made holy, while the Queen, renowned
For state and purity, pursued her steps,
As pious Learning follows Holy Texts.
The careful Monarch bade his spouse return,
And cheerful, glorious, herded Nandinî,
As though 'twere Earth embodied, Oceans four
Her udders: next, his penance to fulfil,
That royal Herdsman sent his guards away,
And walked alone, well-guarded:—Manu's race
Their own right arm defends. With freshest grass
He fed his charge; he fanned her, smoothed her hide,
Nor checked her wayward steps; as shadow close
He followed. When she stood, he also stood;
When she went, on went he; when she lay down,
He sat by patient; when she drank, drank he.

10

20

A very King he strode, whose glory shone,
Unhelped by outward show,—like elephant,
Lord of the herd, whose passion undisplayed
Burns fierce within. His hair in woodland wreath
Was bound, his bow well-strung : so through the woods
He ranged, close guarding Nandinî the Cow.
The wild beasts fled ; but birds in wayside trees
Hymned him with cheerful praises, Yama's peer,
Who strode along unguarded. Climbing vines,
Wind-shaken, showered their scented blooms on him,
Thus splendid, worshipful, as city-dames
Honour with parchèd rice a favourite Lord.

30

Unfearing watched the deer that Archer mild,
Whose face revealed a tender heart, and drank
His beauty with wide gaze. The Forest-gods
He heard, who sang his praise in shady bowers,
On rustling reeds, wind-shaken, for soft flutes.
Nigh fainting from the heat, no sunshade near,
Pure-hearted,—him the breeze refreshed, which bore
Sweet blossoms from the trees, and cooling spray
From foaming waterfalls. The woodland maze
Soon as he entered forest-fires were quenched,
More rich bloomed fruit and flower, and stronger brutes
No longer vexed the weak. At eventide
They took the homeward path : the copper Sun
And tawny Cow, each in its proper sphere,
Had cleansed both Earth and Sky : then to complete
The sacrifice to Gods, to Sires, and guests,

40

She turned : as Works on Faith the Lord of men,
 By righteous souls revered, attended her,— 50
 And gazed on darkening forests, whence the boars
 Were trooping homeward from the pools ; tired deer
 Now grassy glades received, and peacocks flew
 To well-known roosts. Majestic paced the Cow,
 Whose udders swept the ground ; the mighty King
 Moved stately, following ; them his Queen received
 At border of the wood, and longing gazed,
 All open-eyed as thirsting. Thus the Cow
 He followed, and she welcomed : Nandinî
 Like twilight glowed, midway 'twixt Day and Night. 60
 Then with a plate of grain Sudakshinâ
 Revered the Cow, and bent to that broad front
 Whereof the horns seemed door-posts, through whose
 valves
 Success might issue. King and Queen were glad,
 Who thought,—“ Though longing for her calf, she yet
 Stayed to receive our offering : such as She,
 Once pleased, shows favour,—then success is sure ! ”
 Dilîpa next, All-Conqueror, lowly paid
 Due homage to the Saint ; the sacrifice
 For closing day he offered, and the Cow— 70
 Now milked—he followed home to where she lay.
 While Nandinî was sleeping, King and Queen
 Set lamps and flowers about her, then lay down,
 Till with the dawn she rose,—and they rose too.
 So thrice seven days went by. The noble King,

Who saved his realm from harms, still with his Queen
Pursued their hopeful task, to win a son.

Thereafter one fair day the Cow, to try
Her follower's valour, entered that famed grove
Of Gauri's lord, where Gangâ falls in foam, 80
And grass is green and fresh. At once, 'tis told,
A lion sprang and roughly seized the Cow,
While mused the King on Gauri's Father's might,
And thought,—“No foe will dare to harm my charge!”
Her long-drawn cries, re-echoing from the caves,
Aroused him, and recalled his gaze, to see
Where stood the lion with the tawny Cow
Pressed 'neath his paw, as 'twere a *Lodhra*-tree
High on a red-chalk mountain table-land
Full-blossoming. The astounded King, himself 90
In gait a lion, bowman bold, would snatch
An arrow from his belt, to slay the foe,
Deathworthy, as he oft had slain his foes.

He seemed a statue; for his fingers clave
Tight to the arrow, lighting with their gleam
The heron's wing,—while he stood powerless.
Thus stayed from action, furious raged the King,
To strike unable though the foe was nigh,—
Like snake subdued by spells and drugs. But lo!
In human voice,—amazing that great King, 100
By noble souls beloved, a Lion bold,
The Pride of Manu's line,—still holding down

The Cow, that lion spake :—"Cease, mighty King,
 From futile efforts ! vain would be thy shaft,
 Though it should strike me, as a wind that fells
 A tree blows harmless round a mountain-peak.
 Know me Nikumbha's friend, Kumbhodara,
 Who serve the Eight-shaped God, who—when he deigns
 To mount his snow-white bull,—rests on my back
 His holy feet. That God has placed me here 110
 To guard this tree, which as a son he loves,
 Where Skanda's mother's milk divine has flowed,
 As poured from golden jars,—who wept when once
 A forest-elephant had torn its bark
 By furious rubbing : scarcely grieved she more
 To see Ganeṣa wounded by his foes.
 The Trident-bearer placed me here, to scare
 In lion-shape all roaming elephants,
 And prey on beasts that venture near these haunts.

Now doomed to death by Çiva comes this Cow,— 120
 'Twill stay my hunger : so the Moon's sweet sap
 The Dragon drains,—a blood-stained feast I claim.
 No shame is thine, a son's devotion thou
 Hast shown. Return ! for know, when arms are vain
 To fail can shame no warrior." Then the King
 Took comfort from his words : by Çiva's might
 Restrained, he bowed to fate, nor scorned himself.
 Again he spake :—(now first his hand had failed
 To loose his shaft, as Indra's self stood numbed
 At Çiva's angry glance :)—"O King of beasts ! 130

My words will move thy laughter, since I stand
Restrained from action ; yet thou know'st my heart,
I therefore speak. That Lord I reverence
Whose power has made, sustains, and will destroy
Whatever is or moves ; yet can I not
Look on the slaughter of my Master's Cow,
His treasure, that supplies the sacrifice.
Oh, take my body for thy food ! her calf
Longs for the mother, and the night draws on."

Then Çiva's servant smiled : his flashing teeth 140
Shone through the darksome caves, and thus he spake :—
"O King, fair Lord of wealth ! bright life, and youth,
Thou wouldst in haste renounce, and sovereign sway :
'Tis madness, for the cause deserves it not.
Thy people all depend on thee ; thy death
Would only save one life, while living thou
Protectest all the World with constant care.
Fear not the fiery Saint ! though angry, he
Losing one Cow may quickly be appeased
By gift of millions. Save thy precious life, 150
Enjoy the goods of fate,—for Indra's state,
Save that thou dwell'st on Earth, scarce passes thine."

So spake the forest-King ; and mountain-caves,
Loud-echoing, urged that plea in flattering tones,
And wooed the King, who pitiful rejoined,
The while in mute appeal the Cow looked on,
Caught in the lion's paw :—"The Warrior's name
He only worthy bears who saves from harm :

'Tis proverb-lore : whoe'er betrays that trust
Would forfeit Royal state and earn foul scorn. 160
The Saint might well despise all other cows
If this were lost, Surabhi's child and peer,
Which only by the might of Çiva thou
Didst dare attack. My body freely now
I give as ransom ; scarcely wouldst thou find
In her one meal ; the Master's sacred rites
Will not be hindered ! Well thou know'st, who serve
Thyself a Master, and with anxious zeal
Protectest here this tree, that if one lose
His charge, himself unwounded, 'twere not well 170
To face his Lord. Spare then my Fame, nor think
My body only precious ; such as I
Scarce value fleeting life, but Fame we prize
Beyond all other. Friendship, so men say,
By intercourse is ripened : meeting thus
On forest-bounds, I claim thee friend,—and claim
To have my boon, O Çiva's follower !"

Then was the charm reversed, the Monarch free :
He threw his weapons down, and cast himself
A prey before the lion, who well-pleased 180
Had said,—“So be it !” When the noble King
Looked up, expecting death from lion's paw,
A rain of flowers fell on him, and a voice
Sweet sounded in his ear :—“ Rise, O my son ! ”
That voice revived him ; straight he rose, and saw
No lion, but the Cow, whose udders streamed

Like mother's breasts. Amazed he heard her say :—

“ O Hero-King, by magic art I raised

This scene to try thee ; for the Muni's power

Guards me so well that Yama, Lord of Death,

190

Must pass me by,—what other power could harm ?

Thy loyalty hath pleased me, and the care

Thou show'dst for me : choose now, my Son, thy boon !

My udders yield not milk alone, but gifts

Abundant where I love.” Low knelt the King,

Himself a generous giver, clasping hands

Whose skill in fight had won him warlike fame,

And named his boon—a son of noble race,

Born of Sudakshinâ ! The prayer was heard,

And granted,—“ Draw and drink, fair Son,” she said,

200

“ Milk from my udder in a leafy cup !”

“ Nay, Mother !” answered he, “ first let thy child

Be satisfied, nor stint the sacred rites.

Then, if my Master bid me, *I* will drink :—

Thus to a King Earth yields the Royal sixth.”

At this yet more did Nandinî rejoice :

Then to the grove returned she, he behind.

Dilîpa, chief of monarchs, first made known

(While like full moon his face beamed) to the Saint

How he had prospered : then he sought his Queen,

210

Repeating what a joy-lit face had told

To her who loved him. Then, what time the calf

Was satisfied, and evening-rites complete,

Vaçishṭha bidding, drank the noble King,

Blameless and virtuous, milk of Nandinî,—
Thirsting for it as ever for fair Fame.

And now his task was ended, and a feast
Was duly held ; the rites to speed his guests
The Saint performed ; then to the Royal home
Dismissed them, as they grateful took their leave, 220
With fullest honours paid to him, his wife,
To Fire and Sacrifice, to Cow and Calf,—
More glorious still and purer for the rite.

Then with his Queen the much-enduring King
Went in swift chariot on their prosperous way,
With pleasant clangour, like a fruitful vow.
Him like the crescent moon, through penance waned
For noble offspring, whom his folk had mourned,
They greeted now returning, nor could sate
Their eyes with gazing. He, great Indra's peer, 230
Hailed by glad subjects, to his city came
All decked with flags,—whence with unwearied arm,
Strong as the Serpent-King, he ruled the World.

As from great Atri's eye the sky receives
Its light, or Gangâ Çiva's potent seed,
The Queen conceived :—the Sun-race to prolong,
The World's great Regents blessed her fruitful womb.

CANTO III

*Raghu is born: Dilîpa's Horse-sacrifice is stayed by Indra,
with whom Raghu fights.*

THEN in her handmaids' sight Sudakshinâ
Shone pregnant, whence Ikshvâku's stock should spring
More vigorous, like an early crescent moon,
To crown her husband's life. Her, pale as night,
When dawn is near, when dimly shines the moon
And stars are few, or like a *Lodhra*-tree,
The King embraced; he knew earth's scent, and longed,
Nor could be sated, as an elephant
Scarce slakes his thirst at forest ponds, though filled
By plenteous rain. "As Indra Heaven," she said,
"So shall my son rule Earth; his car shall range
To Earth's remotest bound!" So mused the Queen,
On earthly savours fixing her desires.
Her loving Lord, who feared that bashful mood
Might check her utterance, asked her serving-maids
Of all her fancies, bent to ease her mind.
So as her months went on, whate'er she craved
Was brought unasked,—since all in Earth or Heav'n
The mighty King could for her needs provide.

And so conception's pain was soothed for her,
 Whose frame shone stouter, as the climbing-vines
 Their old leaves shedding don the bright array
 Of new-born Spring. The months rolled swiftly past,
 Her bosom swelled, and on her lovely breasts
 The nipples rose, to shame fresh lotus-buds
 Where black bees cluster :—and her Lord was glad.
 As Earth which Ocean clothes, where treasure lurks,
 Or as that tree which nurses secret fire,
 Or as Sarasvatî in flood, she seemed
 To him who constant-minded kept the feasts
 Due for a Prince's birth, as love required
 Owed to his Queen, with pomp that well might match
 The wealth Earth yielded, and the joy he felt.

20

30

With eyes that swam with love the King at home
 Watched as she slowly rose from cushioned seat,
 Her womb weighed down with seed the Gods had
 sown,

Weak hands that scarce could lift the offerings.
 But skilled physicians watched the embryo birth
 Until her time was near, when like the sky
 At eventide she shrank from public gaze ;
 Last, at due season she, fair Çachî's peer,
 Brought forth a son, whose greatness stars foretold
 That high in heaven shone, not quenched by dawn,
 As threefold Virtue wins the Highest Bliss.

40

Calm was the vault of Heaven, soft winds blew
 Clear rose the altar-flame, with butter fed ;

All augured happy days : such princes' birth
Brings good to all mankind. Now round the bed
Where lay the Queen at once the midnight-lamps,
Dimmed by the native glory of the child, 50
Showed but as pictured lights. From the happy maid,
Who brought the joyful news his son was born,
Three things alone the King withheld, but three,—
The moon-bright parasol and royal fans.

With steady eye, like lotus in still lake,
The King devoured his son's fair face, with joy
So great it burst all bounds, as Ocean's tide
At fulness of the moon. Then came a Priest
From Hermits' grove, and perfectly performed
All rites for birth, that so Dilîpa's son 60
As gem new-polished shone with brightest gleam,
The joy-drums' cheerful sound, and twinkling feet
Of dancers echoed through the palace-halls,
Nor less in courts of Heav'n. The happy sire
Could set no prisoner free, for none lay bound
Where crime was not ; himself alone he freed
From coil of debt he owed the Blessed Shades.
Then praying,—“ May this child through Sacred Lore
Pass quickly, warring swiftly smite his foes ! ”
He named him Raghu, “ swiftly-moving ” Prince. 70

The child grew up beneath his Father's eye,
Lord of all wealth, and day by day his strength
Increased, as summer Sun's still-growing power

Pervades the waxing moon. The Prince made glad
 His parents, great as Çiva and Umâ,
 Or Indra and his Queen :—since like themselves
 He daily grew, as grew the Reed-born God,
 Or famed Jayanta, while their mutual love—
 Like love of rain-birds—burned the more intense
 That each one's love was centred on their son.

80

What word his nurse first taught he docile spake,
 Held as he walked her hand, obedient bowed
 When so she bade him : thus his Father's joy
 He perfected,—who took him to his breast,
 As though he bathed in nectar when he clasped
 The body of a son, with eyes askance
 For perfect joy, delight he scarce had hoped !

Thus, following close the Law, he saw his line
 In this fair son established, as the World
 Great Brahmâ sees established, his own self
 In form derived, with primal Virtue clothed.

90

The Prince's childish locks had now been cut
 As Law ordained, his childhood's comrades still
 Preserving their long hair : the principles
 Of learning he acquired, as streams suck up
 Great Ocean's water. Next the sacred cord
 That marked his second birth the noble child
 Assumed, and sages taught him, fruitful soil
 For learning's seed : on well-preparèd fields
 What work men spend will prosper. Oceans four
 Of knowledge soon he crossed, his mental strength

100

Concentring, as the Sun's untiring bays
(Than wind more swift) pass through the sky's four
zones.

The deerskin next he donned, and from his Sire
The spell-ruled weapon's use he learned : the King
Not only was sole Emperor, but in skill
Excelled all archers bold. As bull's estate
A steer attains, or elephant's the calf,
So Raghu passed from childhood up to youth,
And bore a form of gracious majesty.

110

His tonsure o'er, forthwith the careful King
Procured him worthy brides, who lovely shone
As Daksha's daughters wedded to the Moon.
With arms like beams, broad shoulders, mighty neck,
A chest like portal wide, though Raghu seemed
In strength above his Father, modestly
He took rank lower. But the King, who long
Had borne the weight of rule, conferred on him
The state of Sociate-King, by nature meek
And training, to bear half the heavy charge.

120

So goddess Fortune, loving aye the best,
Had left the King, who long had been her choice,
And sought the Heir,—as leaving parent flower
For opening bloom. As Fire grows, fanned by Wind
His charioteer, or Sun when cloud-banks break,
Or elephant when love-streams bathe his brows,—
So did the Son enhance his Father's state,
Till then unmatched.

At length, in season due,
 With princes for his comrades, that high Prince
 Was set as guard to keep the sacred horse, 130
 While King Dilîpa, Indra's peer, performed
 Save one a hundred sacrifices pure.
 But Indra, all unseen, drove off the horse,
 Set free to roam, to keep the rite unflawed.
 Amazed the guards looked on ; that princely host
 Stood by perplexed, confounded, till at length
 Vacishtha's Cow, unbidden, blessed their sight,—
 Well known to all : through her great power the Prince
 Received as from a mother grace to see
 Things veiled from sense. Then looking East he saw 140
 The God who curbed the hills, great Indra's self,
 Drive off the steed reluctant, while his starts
 The driver checked : the God he forthwith knew
 By eyes unwinking and his bright bay steeds,
 And challenged with a voice that pierced the sky,
 To win him from his purpose :—" King of Gods !
 Thee Sages praise as chief of those who share
 All sacred rites : why then impede my Sire,
 Who seeks by sacrifice to win Heaven's bliss ?
 Thine 'tis, O highest Lord, whose eyes are stars, 150
 To smite our impious foes ; if then, my Lord,
 Thyself shouldst spoil the offering, worship's dues
 Would lie destroyed. Ah, let the horse go free,
 Most needful for the Rite ! great guides in Law
 Ne'er stoop to methods base." In stark amaze

At those bold words the King of Gods restrained
His chariot, making answer :—"Noble Prince,
Thou speakest well. Yet know, that those who prize
Their fame must guard it ever 'gainst attack.
Thy father seeks to rob me of my name, 160
That fair renown which through the Worlds is mine.
Alone does Vishṇu reign Supreme, Great Lord
Is Çiva's title only, me the Saints
Call Lord of Hundred Sacrificial Rites :
Alone each keeps his Name. To save this now
I drive thy Father's horse, as Kapila
Drove off the sacred Victim. Vain thy toil
To win it back : seek not to tread the path
Which sons of Sagara trode !"—The Prince replied,
Undaunted keeper of the victim horse :— 170
"Take then thy weapon, King of Gods, since so
Thou choosest war ! Me thou must first lay low,
Or yield the horse." Then on his string the Prince
His arrow laid, and Çiva's self he seemed
Prone o'er the bow, fair, looking to the sky
Expectant : then he sped a golden shaft
Which pierced the God ; that God, who clipped the wings
Of mountains, losing patience, to his Bow—
That weapon dread which gathered clouds compose,—
Laid his unerring shaft : that awful dart, 180
With demon-gore familiar, drank the blood
Of men, before untasted, greedily,
Next, brave as Kârtikeya, that stout Prince

With name-marked arrow smote great Indra's hand,
 All rough from hide of Heaven's elephants,
 And marked with pictures from fair Çachî's arms.
 Then with another, fledged with peacock's plume,
 He rent the Lightning-flag : fierce raged the God,
 As though he 'd torn the heavenly Lakshmi's hair.

Now joined they awful battle : quite apart
 Stood Siddhas and the Prince's host : they twain
 Strove for the mast'ry :—down they shot and up
 Their arrows, hurtling, terrible as snakes
 To look on, wingèd. Nor could Indra quench
 The Prince's inborn courage, though he rained
 His shafts in quick succession : so the cloud
 In vain would quench the fire itself has bred.
 With crescent-headed arrow Raghu cut
 Resplendent Indra's bowstring, which the God
 Grasped in a hand that gleamed with sandalwood,
 Deep-sounding as the Ocean when 'twas churned.
 The God laid down his Bow, and seized in wrath—
 To slay his gallant foe—that flaming Bolt,
 Wherewith of old he clipped the mountains' wings,
 And hurled it. Then the Hero fell to earth
 Sore-wounded, when his comrades' tears fell fast ;
 But soon revived, undaunted, whom their shouts
 Acclaimed on rising. Vṛitra's mighty foe,
 Admiring much the valour which so long,
 Sustaining fierce assault, defied his power :
 For virtue aye is precious : called aloud :—

190

200

210

“Thou only hast withstood my mighty Bolt,
Which mountains could not face ! well-pleased I grant
Whate’er thou wilt, except the Victim horse.”

Then to the King of Gods the Prince replied,
Sweet-voiced, returning to his belt the shaft
Half-drawn, whose feathers shone above his head :—

“ If, mighty Lord, thou wilt nowise restore

The horse, oh ! let my pious father win

The full reward of those long, arduous rites

220

So near perfection, which he may not reach.

Grant this too, Lord of Heaven, that now the King

In council set, by Çiva’s glory kept,

May know this from thy envoy ! ” Then the God

Gave Raghu all he craved, and soared to Heaven.

Warned by the God, the King received his Son

With joy, and stroked with love-numbed hand his limbs,

By lightning scarred. Then, fixed to win Heaven’s bliss,

His honoured life now ending, ladder-like

His ninety-nine great Offerings he stretched out,

230

To ease the way. His soul from things of sense

He quite withdrew, then solemnly gave o’er

To his young son the Kingdom, and himself

Went with his Queen to Hermits’ shady grove,—

The use of aged Kings of Manu’s race.

CANTO IV

Raghu succeeds his Father,—and conquers the World.

THEN Raghu took the Kingdom which his Sire
Had given, and shone more glorious, as at eve
Fire gains fresh splendour from the setting Sun ;
But at the news, in kings who hated him
Blazed wrathful fire from smouldering envy bred.

His folk, in children rich, with hearts and eyes
Alike uplifted, rank on rank, rejoiced
To see him raised on high like Indra's flag.

For, mounted on his elephant, he seized
At once his Father's throne and foemen's realms.

10

Him, consecrate to undivided rule,
With lotus-parasol the Royal State,
Sun-circled, hailed as Lord ; while Eloquence—
In bards embodied—loudly sang his praise
With verse sincere ; and treasure-yielding Earth,
Whom Kings from Manu onwards well had loved,
Wooed him as though she ne'er had loved before.

Like Southern breeze, which neither burns nor chills,
While sternly smiting wrong he won men's hearts ;
By virtues excellent with joy he chased

20

What grief the people felt his Sire to lose, —
As when the fruit appears the mango's flower
Is scarce remembered. Men of counsel spread
Both good and ill before him ; only good
He chose, but never ill ; peculiar grace
The Primal Virtues won,—that all the World
Beneath his sway seemed new. By her cool rays
The Moon refreshes, by his heat the Sun
Gives life ; and he, who shining charmed his folk,
True " King " appeared. His wide-expanded eyes
Lit up his face, but Sacred Lore it was,
Dividing subtle points of right and wrong,
That gave best insight. Firm he set his throne,
On virtue based :—the grateful Earth reposed.

30

Past Summer's heat, serene came Autumn on,
Like Royal State redoubled, lotus-decked :
Then in bright splendour cloudless Sun and he
Together ruled the world, invincible,
When after rain light clouds prepared their way.
The rainbow Indra drew, his mighty bow
Drew Raghu ; in his sphere each reigned supreme,
And blessed by ruling. Autumn with sunshade
And fan of waving grass his Royal state
Affected, but his glory could not reach.
The Moon, with clear cold rays, and his fair face,
Unruffled, drank the folk with equal zest ;
The radiance of their glory seemed dispersed,
In rows of swans, in stars, in lilied lakes

40

Resplendent. Seated in the cane-brakes' shade,
 While women watched the crops they sang his praise, 50
 As good as far-renowned, from childhood up.

Clear shone the waters when Canopus rose,
 Great jar-born Saint, while fearful of defeat
 The foes of Raghu quaked ; for furious bulls,
 Of mighty frame, huge-humped, that tore the banks
 Of rivers, shadowed forth his sportive strength.
 His elephants, in seeming rivalry,
 Poured sevenfold ichor, struck by fragrant blooms
 Of *Sapta-parna*. Autumn now dried up
 The roads, made rivers fordable, and stirred 60
 The King to war and conquest, though his host
 Was not yet ready. Rose the altar-fire,
 With solemn rites for sacrifice prepared,
 To bless his conquering arms : with lambent flame
 It gave auspicious sign. His capital
 The King safeguarded, and his frontier-posts,
 Nor left his rear exposed : then with his host
 Complete, six-membered, conquering he went.
 As Milky Ocean churned with Mandara
 On Vishṇu dashed its foam, so matrons staid 70
 Showered rice on Raghu, when to the East his face
 He turned, with wind-shook pennants threatening
 His foes with chastisement,—while clouds of dust
 His chariots raised and elephants, till earth
 Seemed borne on high, and air a well-trod plain.

In front flashed armour, followed noise of war,

Next dust, then chariots, horses, men,—the host
Fourfold-divided marched. Then in his might
He made the desert plains to laugh with streams,
Made rivers fordable, not hard to cross, 80
And cleared the forests, cutting roads. He led
His valiant host, that rolled like Northern Sea,
Or as when heavenly Gangâ, by the Saint
Brought down to earth, strayed in the braided hair
Of Çiva. Passed the King, whose passing kings
O'erthrown, deposed, or brought to vassalage,
Marked by their fall, as march of elephant
Trees show uprooted. Eastward swept the King
(And one by one subdued the Eastern realms)
To Ocean's shore, which sombre palm-trees shade. 90
Chiefs who opposed he spoiled :—the Suhma power
Submitting, won his grace, who bowed like reeds
Before a mountain-torrent ; but in wrath
He smote the Bangal hosts, who proudly fought,
Vainglorious of their ships : triumphal stones
On Gangâ's isles he reared ; his stubborn foe,
Subdued and then re-settled, tribute brought,
And bowed like rice before his lotus-feet.

Then with his hosts he crossed the Kapiçâ
On living bridge (Utkalas showed the way),
Smote the Kâlingas, on Mahendra's crest
A pillar fixed of conquest, as Mahauts
In head of restive elephants their goads.
For, strong in elephants, with pomp of war

Kâlingas met him, as with rocky rain
 Mountains met Indra's onslaught, when he came
 To clip their wings. Their shower of darts the King
 Sustained undaunted, winning glorious fight,
 While hurtling shafts seemed but the cleansing drops
 Of due lustration ; then his warriors drank
 In shady betel-bowers at once the milk
 Of cocoa-palms, and vict'ry o'er their foes.

110

The King—with lawful triumph—took his fame,
 But not his country, from Mahendra's king,
 And set him free ; then by the sea-coast way,
 Where bowed with fruit Arecas, peaceful passed,
 Since there Agastya ruled. In Kâverî
 His soldiers plunged, all fragrant with the juice
 Of elephants, and stirred the jealous rage
 Of Ocean, spouse of rivers. Pepper-groves
 On Mount Mahendra's skirts, lov'd home of birds,
 His forces occupied, as on he marched
 To conquest. Trampled by his steeds, the bloom
 Upflying from the fruit of cardamums
 Clung to the foreheads of his elephants,
 And challenged their rich scent ; like hooded snakes
 The strong neck-chains embraced the sandal-trunks,
 And bound the elephants that mocked at ropes.
 The Sun himself glows dim on Southern shores,
 Yet could the Pândyas not endure e'en there
 The beams of Sun-like Raghu,—who his fill
 Sported on Malaya and Dardura,

120

130

Which, sandal-clad, like twin breasts crown the shore.
 Invincible in might, the Sahya range
 He crossed, by Ocean left—as 'twere Earth's loins
 Reft of their garment : Jamadagni's son
 Of old disjoined them, but as Raghu's hosts
 Marched further west, the sea and mountain met.

Low bowed the Sahyas, and their choicest pearl—
 From Ocean won where Saptaparnî flows
 Down to the Sea,—presented, symbol fair
 Of spotless fame. Fine-powdered sandalwood,
 Which women of Karela wore, with dust
 Raised by his army soon the King replaced.
 Unforced the yellow seed of *Ketakas*,
 Which river-breezes waft from Muralâ,
 Was scented powder for his mail-clad host.
 Through forests sighed the wind : their harness clanked
 On swiftly-moving steeds, that overpowered
 Areca-trees deep-rustling, while black bees
 Dropped from *Punnâgas* on the streaming brows
 Of elephants love-maddened, tied to trunks
 Of smooth date-bearing palms. The Sea, men tell,
 At Jamadagni's bidding ceased to flow,—
 But through the Western King its tribute gave
 To Raghu. He Trikûta's mountain made,—
 Where furious elephants had graved his fame
 For all to see,—the record of his deeds,
 A mighty pillar. 'Gainst the Persians next
 He through the desert marched, as holy men

140

150

160

By Sacred Learning smite their inbred foes,
 The senses. Scarcely could the King withstand
 Soft wiles of Yavan women, lotus-faced,
 That sought his love,—as Autumn-clouds must fade,
 Untimely-risen, when the Sun new-born
 Beams bright above the lotus. Fiercest war
 He with the Westerns waged, in horses strong,
 While twang of bows alone revealed their place.
 The bearded heads his warriors had cut off
 Now strewed the plain, as bees swarm thickly round 170
 The honeycomb: the remnant bared their heads,
 And claimed his mercy: rage in hero-souls
 Submission will appease. Their toils of war
 His host forgot, carousing in choice bowers
 Which vines surrounded, spread with costly furs.

Thence Northward marched the King, resolved to quell
 The Northern princes with his dreaded shafts,
 As, when his beams have drained moist Southern lands,
 The Sun too turns him North. His mighty acts,
 Wrought on their husbands, Hûna dames proclaimed,— 180
 Recorded on their cheeks in angry scars.
 His horses, resting after toils of war,
 Refreshed on Sindhu's banks, their shoulders shook,
 Where saffron-tendrils clung. *Akshota* trees,
 Bruised by the chains that bound his elephants,
 Bent low: bowed too Kambojas, fain to yield
 Before his prowess: heaps of gold, fine steeds,
 In tribute offering, which the mighty King
 Accepted graciously, and spared their pride.

Famed for his horses, next Himâlaya

190

He mounted, where the clouds of dust they raised

From trampled rocks exalted more the peaks.

Couched in their caves, great lions—brave as he—

Gazed on him undisturbed, nor feared the noise

His warriors made ; while murmuring winds that coursed

Through *Bhûrja* trees, or rustled in the canes,

Moist from the waves of Gangâ, cherished him

As on he swept to conquest. On the rocks

His soldiers rested, fragrant of musk-deer,

That couched in shade of great *Nameru* trees.

200

Tall phosphorescent plants that gleamed at night,

Their lustre doubled by the glancing chains

Which bound great elephants to *Sarâla* trees,

Were lamps for Raghu,—lamps not fed with oil.

Where he encamped the towering *Devadârs*

Told hillmen of his march, with bruised bark

By halters torn. A grim and bloody fight

With mountain tribes he fought, where darts, and stones,

And arrows mingled hurtling, striking fire.

The Utsavasanketas from their feasts

210

He stopped, and taught the Kinnaras to sing

New anthems for his conquests. Tribute there

The tribes presented : Raghu owned the might

Of great Himâlaya, and was by him

Acknowledged peerless : there the Monarch fixed

His glory's mound secure, and shamed the Hill

Paulastya raised of yore. He traversed next

Lauhitya, and Prâgyotish quaked, as shook

Black aloes where he bound his elephants.
Scarce could he bear with Raghu's chariots' dust, 220
Which veiled the sun and darkened all the sky,
Yet brought no rain ; how then should he withstand
The armèd host ? Him Kâmarûpa's king
Served with his elephants, those mighty beasts,
Love-maddened, which he used to smite his foes ;
And gems for flowers he offered at those feet,
Which—laid on golden footstools—shone divine.

All realms subdued, home came the mighty Lord,
While humbly kings, with heads unshaded now,
Received the dust raised by his chariot-wheels. 230
Then Sacrifice he made for Rule Supreme
By conquest won, when all his wealth a King
Bestows in alms ;—as clouds store up the rain,
To feed their bounty generous kings take tax.
But when the solemn Sacrifice was o'er,
Great Raghu, whom his ministers loved well,
With signal honours healing first the wounds
Defeat had branded, sent away the kings
Who graced his triumph,—and who yearned to clasp
Their long-forsaken queens,—dismissed in peace. 240

Low bowed that royal band before his feet,
Not boastingly stretched out, with lines, and flags,
And thunderbolts adorned, and jasmine white,
Which from their diadems those kings let fall.

CANTO V

Raghu's splendid Generosity: Aja is born, and, when grown to Manhood, starts to woo Indumatî.

Now when the Imperial Sacrifice the King,
All-Conqueror, had performed, and all his wealth
Was lavished, came to seek his Teacher's fee
Kautsa, whom mighty Varatantu taught
Till he in Lore was perfect. Him the King
Met courteous, mighty, splendid,—gave his gift
In earthen vessel, for his gold was done.
Low bowed the King: then, rich in fame, and taught
To know the right, observant of his due,
He seated him, and thus addressed:—"How fares
Thy Master, keen of insight, chief of Saints
Who frame the Veda's hymns? from whom thy Lore
Thou tookst as from the Sun this world gets life.
Oh, say not that the Sage's triple toils
Austere, of limb, speech, thought—which Indra fears—
Are now disturbed! Have storms laid waste the trees
That shade and guard your dwellings, which with care
Ye've watered, fostered, nurtured from the seed!

And are the deer unharmed, which Munis tend,
 That couch on *Kuṣa* kept for sacred use, 20
 And bear their young while clasped in Saintly arms?
 And are those streams unsullied, which erst pure
 Libations yielded both for Gods and Shades,
 Where stood the holy pillars? Is the rice,
 Self-springing food for you and for your guests,
 Spoiled by the rabble, whom the husks should feed?
 Has the great Saint dismissed thee perfect, Saint,
 That now thou shouldst take wife, and guide thy home,
 That second life to pass, whence draws the world
 Most earthly profit? All my care, thou know'st, 30
 Is still to serve: oh, tell me how I may
 Best serve thee, or thy Teacher,—for that grace
 I look for from thee!"

Now, dismayed, the Saint

Looked on the earthen dish, and knew the cause;
 Then, hopeless to obtain it, spake his need:—
 "Know, famous King, that all is well with us!
 Thou rulest, men must prosper: while the Sun
 Is high in heav'n, no darkness can prevail
 To dim men's sight. Still has thy glorious race
 Revered the worthy; yet my need is such 40
 As scarce thou canst supply, though thou surpass
 In that thy Sires: untimely I have come,
 Unhelped must go! For, clad in glorious fame,
 Else thou art bare, thy riches well bestowed,—
 Stripped as the wild-rice stalk, when savage hands

Have spoiled its fruit. Thou, Lord of all, show'st well,
Thus seeming poor, as still the cold-rayed Moon,
Which Gods drink up wins blessing as it wanes.
No further errand mine : my Teacher's fee
Elsewhere I'll seek,—so fare thee well, O King !
The rain-bird craves not rain from emptied clouds,
Nor missing grieves !”

50

The King called back the Saint,
As he was turning, asked him :—“ Say how great,
Or what the fee he asks.” The perfect Sage
Thus answered him, the lowly Lord of all,
For whom was made the mighty Sacrifice :—

“ I asked the Sage, when I had won all lore,
What meed was his. He first pronounced his fee
My long-proved, loyal love : but, further urged,
In hasty wrath, nor thinking of my state,
How poor I am,—‘ The sciences,’ he said,
‘ I taught thee scarce can fourteen millions pay :
That bring me !’ Coming here, full plain I see
The name of King is left thee, not the wealth :
That earthen bowl proclaims it. How dare I
Ask from thee then the boundless meed he claims ?”

60

So spake the Sage :—but quick the King supreme,
As Vishṇu lovely, clean of heart and pure
From base affections, pleaded :—“ Strange disfame
It were to Raghu, if a perfect Sage
Who sought his Teacher's fee, should turn away,
To seek his guerdon from another Lord !

70

Be thou my guest, O Sage ! like Holy Fire
 Keep pure my hearth for me two days or three,
 That I may help thee." Gratefully the Saint
 Consented, while the King, whose plighted word
 None e'er knew fail, set forth to wrest the boon
 From famed Kuvera, since Earth teemed with wealth.

So great his glory, which Vaçishṭha's spells
 At his Anointing gave, his car unchecked 80
 Would course through air, o'er mountains and o'er seas,
 Like wind-borne cloud. Then in his car at eve,
 With store of arms, brave, pious Raghu slept,—
 To smite at dawn Kuvera, whom he deemed
 A neighbour-king, no more. But lo ! at dawn
 Amazed his treasure-keepers told the King,
 What stayed his march, that while men slept there fell
 From Heav'n a rain of gold and filled his store.

The whole bright heap Kuvera fearing sent,
 The King to Kautsa gave, as 'twere a crag 90
 By lightning split from Meru ; and the folk
 Praised both the Saint, who asked his fee, no more,—
 And praised the generous King, who pressed on him
 More than his asking. Now, the well-pleased Saint,
 At last consenting, took the golden store,
 Which camels bore and mares, and laid his hands
 On Raghu bending low, and parting blessed :—

"While such a King rules men, well may the Earth
 Yield wealth with which she teems ; yet how conceive
 Thy fame, for whom e'en Heav'n pours forth such store 100

Beyond men's asking? All things else thou hast,
 Save what I now bestow : receive a son
 Rich as thyself in virtue, as thy Sire
 Got thee, praiseworthy!" Him the Saint thus blessed,
 Then sought his Master : and the King ere long
 Received the promised son, as living souls
 From sunlight power of seeing : for the Queen
 At Brahmâ's hour, 'tis told, brought forth a prince,
 As Umâ's child resplendent,—whom his Sire
 Named Aja, Unborn, from the Soul Supreme.

110

His Father's joy was he : like him in might,
 Tall as himself, as vigorous, grew the Prince,
 As shines a fresh-lit lamp with equal light
 To that it springs from. Teachers trained the boy
 In lofty learning, radiant beamed his youth,
 And Fortune loved him well, yet seemed to wait
 (Like bashful virgin) till the King his Sire
 Should mate her with him.

Now great Bhoja, King
 Of Krathakaiçakas, to Raghu sent
 A noble envoy, bidding Aja come
 To fair Indumatî's Swayamvara,
 His sister's Maiden Choice. The King, well-pleased,
 Both deeming Aja come to manly prime,
 And her a peerless bride, sent forth the Prince,
 With lordly host well-guarded on the way
 To high Vidarbha. Ever on the march
 Pavilions fair received him, while the folk

120

With blessings and with gifts his favour sought.
 His journey o'er, on Narmadâ's green banks,
 Where, gently stirred and moistened by the breeze, 130
 Waved *Karang* trees, his weary host found rest,
 And reared their standards, dusty from the road.

Sudden a mighty Tusker reared his front
 Amid the waves, where hovering swarms of bees
 Betrayed his presence, washing ichor sweet
 From his broad temples,—while his blunted tusks
 Showed by the dark-blue streak (the ore washed off)
 How on Rikshâvan's rocks he spent his rage.
 Up rose he, faced the bank, and nimbly waved
 His mighty trunk before him and behind, 140
 Roared loudly, and with all-resistless strength
 Burst through the torrent, breaking watery chains.
 Broad-chested as a mountain, tangled nets
 Of clinging weeds he drew, the while in front
 A threatening mass of waters rose,—then climbed
 The river-bank. His captive peers he marked,
 And from his cloven brows the ichor-stream,
 Checked only by the wave, returned in flood.

That much exciting savour when they knew,
 As acrid as the *Saptachada's* sap, 150
 The mighty beasts of Aja's host broke bounds,
 Unheeding sharpest goads, and fled. The camp
 At once confusion seized : in headlong flight
 Yoke-oxen broke their bands, threw o'er the cars
 (Their axles smashed),—and active warrior-hands

Scarce saved the timid dames. The Prince alone
Availed to stay the rout : who slightly drew,—
To lightly wound, not slay (so runs the Law),—
His bowstring, loosed a shaft, and 'twixt the eyes
The mighty brute he smote. The bestial shape 160
At once, being struck, the wondering army saw
Shed like a garment, while in radiant guise,
In heavenly beauty clad, with light-rays crowned,
A princely form appeared. A rain of flowers,
Won by his power from Heav'n, he grateful poured
On Aja's head ; then spoke in winning tones,
The while his flashing teeth lit up the gems
That clung about his neck :—"Of old my pride
Drew down Matanga's curse, and doomed my stay
In hateful tusker's shape ; for I, fair Prince, 170
Priyamvada am named, great Indra's son.

"Moved by my humble prayers, the Saint appeased
More mild became, as water which the flame
May raise to boiling, yet by nature's law
Resumes its grateful cold,—and thus decreed :—
'When Aja, sprung in high Ikshvâku's line,
With iron-pointed shaft shall cleave thy brow,
Thy proper glorious shape thou shalt regain !'
To see thee long I've yearned : now, mighty Prince,
Freed by thee from my curse, with worthy gift 180
I must requite thee,—else my power restored
Were useless. Take, O friend, this magic shaft
Named Sleep-compeller, launched and then recalled

By spells diverse, which to its master gives
 Sure triumph o'er his foes, those foes unhurt.
 Blush not for shame at only seeming harm !
 Thy blow was kindness ! grieve me not, I pray,
 By scorning this my gift."

The courteous Prince,
 That Moon of men, gave thanks ; then faced the
 North,

Touched the pure waters of the Moon-born stream, 190
 And, skilled in arms, received the magic dart
 Which his high friend now gave. Thus Fate decreed
 How these, once seeming foes, wayfaring met,
 Should join fast friendship :—Chaitraratha's groves
 The one now sought, well-ruled Vidarbha's realm
 The other welcomed soon, whom courteously
 Before the city gates the joyful King
 Received, as Ocean swells to greet the Moon
 With heaving waves, and to the city brought,
 His glory waiving, with observance sweet 200
 And lowly bearing,—till the crowds might deem
 Their King was guest, and Aja was the King.
 Then as the God of Love, his boyhood past,
 Takes on the pride of youth, so Raghu's heir
 Possessed the lovely palace, newly-built,
 Before whose gates an altar stood, and jars
 Brimful of water, destined for his use.

Then Sleep, as loving wife who seeks her lord,
 To Aja's eyes came late, who sighed and longed

To win the peerless Maid, to woo whose Choice
The rival kings had come in pomp and state.

210

Him ere 'twas day, that all-accomplished Prince,
Whose shoulders bore the scars of ear-drops gemmed,
From whose dark limbs the ointment had been wiped
By silken bedding, with sweet songs his peers,
Well-skilled to sing, roused for the auspicious day.

“Awake, wise Prince! for darksome night is past!
And Brahmâ now has cleft the weight of rule,
Which half thy Sire bears up and half Thyself.

“The waning Moon now sinks, and yields the prize
Of beauty to thy face,—whom Lakshmî wooed,
Forsaken and despised by thee for Sleep.

220

“Unclose thine eyes, that so by mutual gift
Their beauty and the lily's may increase,
Where roll or pupils dark or black wild bees.
The morning breeze, that vainly seeks to win
From other source the scent of thy sweet breath,
Tears from their stalks the flowers that loosely hang
On blossoming trees, or woos the lotus bright
New opening to the Sun. Now on the leaves
Tinged ruddy rests the dew, a pearly band'
With double lustre, as thy gladsome smile
Plays o'er the gleaming teeth. The dawn, fair Prince!
Dispels night's clouds until the Sun arise,
Then ceases: shall thy Sire then crush the foe,
Now thou art come to lead his armed host?

230

“Thy elephants have burst the bands of sleep,

They drag their clanking chains, and quit their couch ;
Their tusks like fresh buds gleam when bathed in light
Shed by the morning sun, a glittering show,
As stained with ochre from the mountain-sides.

240

“These steeds Vanâyu-bred, O mild-eyed Prince,
Bound with long tent-ropes, shaking slumber off,
Stain with hot breath the rock-salt left to lick.

“Thy flower-wreaths languish now, and now the lamps
Burn dim, and lose the halo of their rays,
And thy caged parrot, warbling cheerful notes,
Mocks this our morning hymn !”

So sang the bards.

The Prince, fresh roused from sleep by tuneful praise,
Forsook his couch, as Heav'n's great elephant
By cranes' clear song aroused an islet leaves
Of holy Gangâ. Due devotions paid,
Commanded in the Law for morning's prime,
The bright-browed Prince, by skilful hands arrayed
In fitting vesture, sought the lofty hall,
Where Kings were met to grace the Maiden's Choice.

250

CANTO VI

The Wooing of Indumatî, and her Choice of Aja.

THEN fair as Gods who mount celestial cars,
In royal robes arrayed, and seated high
On thrones, refulgent, raised on dais-steps,
The noble range of suitor-kings he saw.
These looked dismayed on Aja, for he seemed
A second Love, at Rati's prayer restored
To that bright form which Çiva's wrath burnt up,—
Nor longer hoped to win Indumatî.
By carven stair he mounted to the throne
The King assigned him, as a lion stalks
O'er rocks to gain a mighty mountain-peak.

10

Then sat he down on diamond-sparkling seat,
With costliest cushions spread, that glorious Prince,
As Kârtikeya mounts his favourite bird.
His beauty much enhanced his stately mien,
A dazzling lustre which perplexed men's eyes,
Like lightning-flash o'er gloomy banks of cloud :—
So by his flawless grace high Raghu's son,
Amid their gorgeous thrones and splendid robes,
In simple vesture shone as 'mongst Heaven's trees

20

Famed Pârijâta shines. The eyes of men
Forsook all other Kings to gaze on him :
So, leaving woodland blossoms, wild bees swarm
To streaming brows of elephants. As they sat,
Their royal lineage, drawn from Sun and Moon,
Bards skilled in olden story fitly praised ;
Rose from the smouldering aloes fragrant smoke,
Which all-pervasive round the banners curled ;
Auspicious music floated from the conchs
In ambient air, and through the city-groves
Glad peacocks madly danced. The Princess came,
In wedding-vesture clad, on litter borne
With solemn pomp, to choose herself a Lord,—
And down the eager rows of suitors passed.

30

That perfect woman, Brahmâ's last best work,
The goal of countless hearts, drew all their souls
Out through their eyes,—the lumpish clay alone
Remained behind. When Spring reviving comes,
It decks in varied charms the forest-trees :—
So showed those Kings by various arts their love.

40

One toying twirled a lotus, sportive struck
The clustering bees with petals, balling so
The golden pollen. Smiling playfully,
Another turned his beaming face askant ;
His flower-wove necklet fall'n, a moment caught
On jewelled bracelet, careless he replaced.
One, sidelong glancing, with his lotus-foot
Traced lines on golden footstool, where the nails

Like summer lightning gleamed. Another prince
In seeming earnest talk his neighbour held, 50
His left arm resting on his chair, that so
His shoulder raised and back broke through his wreath.
Of *Ketaka* one fashioned with his hands,—
Those hands that lately clasped his queen in love,—
An earring blossom apt to win the heart
Of that fair Princess. One tossed dice in sport,
The while his jewelled bracelets gleamed on hands
Light-brown as lotus, seamed with banner-lines.
One fixed his coronet with nervous hand,
Ablaze with diamonds,—though it had not fall'n. 60

Then eloquent Sunandâ, high-born dame
Who ruled the palace, led the royal Maid
To where the mighty Lord of Magadha
Sat gorgeous ; then with clear, deep voice proclaimed
His worth,—well-taught the name and fame of each :—

“ Deep are his thoughts, and strong his arm to save !
In Magadha he rules, his people's joy,
Whose blazing wrath burns up his stubborn foes.
Alone he's Spouse of Earth, though thousand Kings
Usurp the style ; as Soma rules the night 70
'Mid stars and planets, pale beside his throne,
So rules he Earth. By constant rites devout,
Where Indra still appears, he pales the cheek
Of Çachî, while her curls hang limply down
Undecked with Svarga's flowers,—a mourning bride,
Her husband absent, Give, O give thy hand

To him in wedlock : charm bright, loving eyes
 By festal entry to his noble town,
 Whose dames expectant wait !” She spake, and paused :
 The Princess slightly bowed, thus silently 80
 Rejecting him, her wreath of fragrant flowers
 With *dûrva* intertwined, a shade displaced.

Then to a second King she led the Maid,
 As wind-stirred, rippling wave on Mânasa
 To second lotus brings a graceful swan,—
 And praised him thus :—“ Behold great Anga’s Lord,
 Whom heavenly brides themselves have vainly wooed,
 Such youth and beauty his : his elephants,
 Trained by skilled masters, match Airâvata :
 He rules like Indra. Pearl-like tears were shed 90
 By his foes’ brides,—a necklace all unstrung.
 Fair speech and noble presence dwell apart,
 Except in him ; with Fame and Eloquence
 Thou mayst be third, if thou wilt choose this mate.”

“Go forward !” said the Maiden, turning so
 Her eyes from Anga’s Lord, though well she knew
 Him worthy of all love, save only hers.

Then, passing onward with her fair Princess,
 The Lady praised another noble King,
 Renowned for virtue, terrible to foes, 100
 Fair as new-risen moon :—“ Avanti’s Lord
 Behold, long-armed, broad-chested, thin of flank,
 With doubled radiance shining, like the Sun
 By Viçvakarma polished and refined.

When he in dauntless might goes forth to war,
 The gems that flash from rivals' crowns are dimmed
 By dust his steed casts up, as evening clouds
 Obscure the Sun. Hard by that mighty God,
 Whose brow the Moon adorns, this noble King
 Dwells in great Kâla, so through all the months
 He with his queens takes joy in lightsome nights.
 O slender-waisted Maid, wilt thou not yield,
 And find thy bliss in wandering through fair groves,
 That wave 'neath Sipra's breeze, with this great King?"

110

But not on him the peerless Maiden fixed
 Her tender love, though lily-like he charmed
 Friends, scorching foes as Sun dries up a marsh :—
 So close at dawn those flowers which love the Moon.

Sunandâ next before Anûpa's Lord
 Led her fair Lady, Brahmâ's loveliest child,
 For virtues eminent, whose teeth like pearls
 Flashed white ; then spake once more her winning words :—

120

"In days of old great Kârtavîrya, King
 And Saint, whose thousand arms in battle swayed
 His rivals crushed, till all alone he ruled,
 And triumph-pillars planted through the worlds.
 So holy he, that even thought of sin,—
 Appearing with his Bow to tempted souls,
 He smote through all his realm. He kept in bonds
 Proud Lankâ's Lord, to whom e'en Indra bowed,
 Who languished, sighing through his many mouths,
 Till he released him, humbled. In his line

130

Pratâpa rules, devout, firm friend of Saints,
 Whom Fortune loves, not fickle—as the world
 Defames her. Blazing fire he wields in fight,
 Nor fears the mighty Axe which Râma bore,
 To Warriors fatal, more than lotus-leaf.
 Be thou this Hero's bride ! so shalt thou gaze
 Enraptured from the palace on soft curves
 Seductive of fair Revâ, where she clasps
 The mighty loins of strong Mahishmatî.”

140

Nor he, for all his beauty, favour found
 In her pure fancy, as the silvery Moon,
 Dispersing Autumn's clouds, can win no grace
 From lotuses that woo the Sun. The Maid
 Next heard Sunandâ praise Sushena's worth,
 Of Surasena Lord, whom heavenly choirs
 Hymn ever, light of both his high descents :—

“This King devout is flower of Nîpa's race,
 To whom the Virtues sought, as timorous deer
 Seek Hermits' peaceful grove, and waive the strife
 That Nature sets between them. Calmly brave
 He ever guards his palace, moon-like bright,
 And blazing smites his foes,—o'er whose blank roofs
 Grass grows. His lovely queens, who frequent sport
 In waves of Yamunâ, so tinge the stream
 With fragrant sandal from their breasts, 'twould seem
 That Gangâ's yellow waters mingled there
 Ere Mathurâ was reached. The gem he wears
 Upon his chest, was lost by Kâliya

150

160

Who fled from Garuḍa, and almost shames
Kaustubha, Krishṇa's pride. Ah, Maiden, choose
That noble Prince for mate ! then pass thy youth
Rejoicing in Brindâban, not less fair
Than Chaitraratha, couched on soft flower-sprays,
Reclining on smooth rocks with foam-drops wet,
With salt too pungent : feast thine eyes, Fair Maid,
On peacocks of Govardhan, dancing free
In Autumn rains among the hollow rocks ! ”

170

Him too the Maiden passed with stately mien,
Another's destined bride, as rivers pass
Great mountains on their way to Ocean's breast.

Then came the Princess to Kalinga's King,
Hemâṅgada,—and then Sunandâ spake,—
While beamed like full fair moon the peerless Maid,—
Designing him whose wrists were clasped with gems,
From foes fit tribute :—“ See Mahendra's King,
Lord too of Ocean, mighty as the hill
That seems to lead his host, an elephant
In pride of youth ! Of archers chief is he,
With long strong arms all rough with bowstring-scars,
Like streams of brackish tears from pain-dimmed eyes
Of foemen's brides. Great Ocean's thunderous roar,
Whose boisterous waves he from his palace marks,
A fitting time-drum, wakes him at day-dawn
With voice o'erpowering all his martial strains.
Choose him thy Lord ! and walk by Ocean's shore,
Where palm-trees whisper, where moist breezes fan

180

The wearied brow, and waft from distant isles 190
 The clove's rich scent !” Vidarbha's sister turned,
 Nor heeded all her praise, unloving, loved,
 As royal Fortune turns, though wooed with skill,
 If Fate be adverse. Next to Nâgpur's King
 The Lady passed, and thus proclaimed his worth :—
 “O bright-eyed Princess ! see this generous King,
 The Pândus' Lord : wreaths from his shoulders hang,
 His arms sweet sandal stains, a mountain-lord
 He seems, amid whose crests the rising Sun
 Glows, while the roaring torrents dash and foam. 200
 Him great Agastya greeted,—he who bowed
 The pride of Vindhya, who wide Ocean drained,—
 And of his welfare asked, when he had bathed
 When the Great Rite was over. Lankâ's King,
 For Janasthâna fearing when he led
 His serried hosts to conquer Indra's world,
 Was fain to make him friend,—for he had won
 The Bow of Çiva. Give to him thy hand
 In happy wedlock ! Steadfast as the world,
 Be co-wife with the sunny Southern land, 210
 Which Ocean rich in pearls clasps lovingly ;
 And joyous ever sport where Malaya
 Slopes terraced, where the dark-green betel-boughs
 Are intertwined, where creepers clasp smooth trunks.
 Dark is he, thou art fair : let each enhance
 By union other's beauty, as do cloud
 And lightning-flash !” Unmoved the royal Maid

Passed on : the lotus waits the rising Sun,
Nor heeds the Moon's pale beams, but stays close shut.

Now as the Maid went by, each suitor-King, 220
Lit for a moment by her dazzling eyes,
Like wayside tower by passing lamp, sank back
In deepest gloom. Then Aja's heart was stirred,
Who questioned with himself, "Shall I find grace,
Or fail like them?" His right arm throbbing checked
The rising doubt, and well-nigh snapped the cords
That bound his wrist ; but him the bright Princess
Found faultless, yielded him her love, and stopped—
Nor further passed—as rests a swarm of bees
Contented on the mango in full flower, 230
Nor seeks beyond it. Then Sunandâ skilled
To know the rank of men, perceiving soon
How all her heart the royal Maid had set,—
That fair, full Moon,—on him, took up her tale :—

"In high Ikshvâku's line Kakutstha sprang,
'Mong Kings a King, for virtue eminent,
Whose royal race still rules North Koçala,
And bears his famous name. That King renowned,
As Çiva swift in fight, ascended high
On Mount Mahendra, made the Demons' wives 240
To spoil their cheeks of unguents, weeping loud ;
And, with his bracelet touching Indra's own,
Loosed by the rubbing of Airâvata,
In dignity possessed an equal seat
With him, when even in most dazzling shape.

More splendid shone the fame of that proud race,
 When bright Dilîpa rose, its radiant lamp,
 Who—wanting one of his full tale of Rites,—
 One hundred,—calmed the fears of Svarga's Lord,
 Nor further laboured. 'Neath his calm, strong rule 250
 The very breeze disturbed not lovers' skirts
 As through the groves they strayed, or sank to rest,
 Far less dared rude men's hands. Dilîpa's throne
 His son, unconquered Raghu, fills, who late
 Made sacrifice for Empire Won : bestowed
 His treasure wholly, all he'd gathered up
 From Earth's four quarters and increased, nor kept
 Aught save an earthen vessel. His renown
 Cannot be measured, weighed, or told in words :
 It scaled high mountains, crossed wide seas, and passed 260
 The portals of Pâtâla,—yea, has risen
 To Heaven, immortal. From his kingly loins
 Prince Aja sprang, as fair Jayanta sprang
 From Indra. Now this Prince bears half the weight
 Of that high charge his Sire erst bore alone,
 Unwearied, as a mighty bull-calf bears
 One half the yoke. Choose him, bright Maid ! thy peer
 He only is in beauty, lineage, youth,
 In virtues all, with modesty the chief :—
 Ah, let the pearl be set in finest gold !” 270

When now Sunandâ ceased, the royal Maid
 Dropped veil of coyness, by her favouring glance,
 Bright with pure love, proclaiming blameless choice,

As 'twere with fateful wreath : but modesty
Restrained her tongue, though o'er her slender form
The hair upstanding showed her ardent love.

Then smiling spake Sunandâ, when she marked
The Maid's confusion :—" Gracious Lady, now
Pass we to others !" She from angry eye
Flashed fire, indignant. Graceful as a swan,
Helped by her handmaid, laid she then the wreath,
With golden sandal scented, on the neck
Of mighty Raghu's son,—a present Love.

280

Clasped by that wreath, where all auspicious flowers—
And they alone—were woven, Raghu's child,
The dauntless Prince, such rapture felt as though
Already he were clasped in love's embrace
By that bright Princess. " Here the cloudless Moon
Wins clear effulgence ! Gangâ's self unites
With her fit mate, wide Ocean !" Loud rejoiced
In shouts like these, harsh to the rival Kings,
The happy people, who delighted saw
Their virtues, else unmatched, now fitly joined
In perfect union. Then the Bridegroom's friends
Beamed bright for gladness : gloomy ranks of Kings,
Their hopes dashed down, opposed a hostile front.
So, when the Sun has risen, his glorious beams
Expand the flowers that love him, but seal up
Those other flowers that open to the Moon.

290

CANTO VII

*Aja's Wedding ; and how he smote his treacherous Rivals
on his Way Home.*

VIDARBHA'S King then led the joyous train
To wed his sister to that worthy Lord,—
Like Skanda mating with the Heavenly Host.
As morning-planets when the day begins,
Went to their camps the rival-Kings chagrined,
Scorned by Indumatî. Both mien and dress
Revealed their angry mood ; but Çachî's power
Prevailed, and none disturbed the marriage-rite.

Then with her Bridegroom went the royal Bride,
Where o'er their way fresh garlands stretched, and where 10
Like Indra's bow flashed paintings on the gates,
While shading banners kept away the heat.
Bright maids at golden lattices looked out,
To see the Prince, nor heeded other work,
But lit with glancing motions all the house.
Thus shone they various :—one in hot haste ran
To reach the lattice, while her hand held up
Her clustered locks, from which the loosened wreath

Had well-nigh fall'n, nor stayed to bind her hair.

Another changed her mincing gait, and sped

20

To gaze, her footsteps marking with red lac,

Still dripping liquid from that dainty foot

Her handmaid stained ; a third one held the brush,

One brow well-darkened and the other bare,—

Yet so she went to gaze ; her dress one maid

Held up, which down had slipped and left unclad

Her form irradiate by the bracelet's gleam,

Nor tied her zone,—so hurried was her pace.

And one with cramped toes kept up the belt,

Where half its gems were strung, and limping ran

30

To see the wondrous sight. Most brilliant shone

Those windows lit within by glancing eyes,

That swam with joy, as scented with red wine,

And keen to know the least detail, like bees

They swarmed. Their eyes, fixed full on him alone,

Drank in the Prince's charms, as though their hearts

And senses all were merged and lost in sight.

The Princess, worthy of her suitor-Kings,

Deemed well her Choice had ended : only so

Could she have found an equal mate, as found

40

Fair Lakshmî hers,—the mighty Lord of all.

Like Love they were and Springtime ; she had found

'Mong myriad Kings the soul that halved her own,

And claimed her beauty,—for the soul re-born

Knows of its former fates. The Prince, rejoiced

To hear sweet strains which city-matrons sang,

Passed to the palace, where with welcoming wreath,
His royal brother waited. There the Priest
Revered of Bhoja, having duly served
The fire with butter clear, and set it forth 50
As witness of the wedding, joined that pair,
Pure bridegroom with pure bride. Prince Aja clasped
Her hand in his, and greater lustre gained,
As when a mango clasps with answering sprout
The *Açoka's* tendril. On his limbs the hair
Stood stiff for joy, while tender love made her
Glow radiant : 'twas as though their joinèd hands
Shared passion's fire between them ; pleasing pain
Shone in their meeting eyes, where mutual love
Stood self-revealed. Then round the blazing fire 60
They circled to the left, as day and night
Course round Mount Meru, and conjunctive beamed.
Next at the Priest's command, great Brahmâ's peer,
With love-lorn partridge-eyes the modest Bride
Threw on the fire her offering of rice,
While,—fed with cassia-shoots, fried grain, and oil,—
Auspicious rose the flame, and round her cheek
Its tongue curled gently, winning for a space
Such lustre as the lotus in her ear
That trembled,—while her face grew rosy-red, 70
And ointment melted round her eyes diffused,
And barley-ears hung on her, at the Fire
That sanctified the rite. The princely pair
Sate on their golden throne, and glad received

What moist rice-grains the King, most noble host,
And householders, and matrons, threw on them.

That Monarch, mighty, lamp of his high race
(When now his sister's marriage was complete),

Sent to each suitor-King befitting gifts

By honoured hands, which they with feigned joy

80

Received ; but hid deep anger, as a lake

Whose quiet face hides many a scaly foe.

They thanked their host, requiting him with gifts

Of treacherous import ; then departing, planned

A conjoint subtle scheme to seize the Bride,—

Which to work out they close beset the road

Whereby the Prince must go. Rich dowry gave,

As well beseemed, King Bhoja to the Maid,

And convoyed Aja on his journey home.

Three nights he camped with that world-famous Prince,

90

Then left him,—as the Moon deserts the Sun,

When fades her borrowed light. The rival-Kings,

Recalling earlier grievance 'gainst his Sire,

For tribute taken, now combined in wrath

To smite the Prince, who won from them the Pearl

Of women, Bhoja's sister. Bride and Prince

The haughty band of Kings stayed, as they drove,

As when Prahlâda Vishṇu's steps opposed,

When Bali's boon was given. The mighty Prince

Consigned his Bride for safety to the care

100

Of one both warrior tried and counsellor sage,

Then dashed impetuous on the hostile ranks,

As Çoņa's waves smite Gangâ. Armies met
In equal shock of battle : foot to foot
Fought warriors, horse to horse, and car to car,
While clarions brayed. No tribal war-cry rose,
But famous names were known by hurtling shafts,
That smote the foe reluctant. Dust of strife,
By horses stirred and chariots, veiled the Sun
(Spread by the flapping ears of elephants), 110
And tempered heat ; the while rich pennons waved,
Which, rent by rushing wind, devoured the dust
Raised by the hosts, as fish drink eagerly
Fresh Autumn's pools though muddy. Through thick clouds
The noise of wheels proclaimed a chariot, bells
Betrayed huge elephants, while friend and foe
Were only known from shouted names of chiefs.

Blood streamed from horses, elephants, and men,
By weapons wounded, shining as the Sun
New-risen, ruddy, o'er a field obscured 120
By dust-born darkness, hemming in men's sight.
That dust, whose root the blood had cut, streamed up
As smoke from fire new-kindled, while the wood
Lies in the hearth, blown sideways by the wind.
Now car-borne heroes, waking from their swoon
Sore-wounded, angry at their steeds' retreat,
Rebuked the drivers, turned their cars, dealt death
To those who gave them wounds,—by pennon known.
Now skilful archers' shafts, split in mid flight
By darts opposing, kept their onward course, 130

Infixing deadly barbs : in battle-shock
Met elephants, whose drivers' heads—smit off
By keen-edged quoits,—kites snatched with eager claw,
And lingering dropped. A horseman spared his foe
(Ev'n in the attack) if bruised by shock of horse,
And stayed his leisure. Like Death's banquet-hall
Showed that dread field,—with dead men's skulls for fruit,
For beakers fallen helmets, blood for wine.
But wounded elephants, whose mighty trunks
Sharp swords of mailed warriors half cut through, 140
High-frenzied, quenched with water-streams the sparks
Struck from the flashing steel :—so raged the fight.
One broken arm, which swooping vultures seized,
A greedy jackal caught, and hurt his jaw
On bracelet-buckle. Where a foeman's sword
Had cut the neck, straight to his Heavenly car
The warrior rose, and clasped his bride divine,
While still his lifeless trunk danced on the plain.
In mutual slaughter other two had fall'n,
Drivers and fighters ; leaping from their cars, 150
With clubs they first engaged ; when these were broke,
Close-locked in fiercest strife, by mutual wounds
At once they died :—then, suitors in the skies
To one fair Nymph, forthwith renewed the fight.

Now conquering, now defeated, swayed the hosts
Like Ocean's waves, that winds drive to and fro,
By dust-clouds veiled, as through damp morning-mist
The rising Sun shows dimly. Last the Prince,

Fair as the God of Love, unwearied still,
Launched at his foes that sleep-compelling dart, 160
Which—heaven-derived—Priyamvada had given.
Then, struck to sleep, the Kings' whole armed host
Stood motionless : no strength to draw the bow
Was in their hands, while on their shoulders drooped
The helmet-chains ; they leaned against the staves
That bore the flags. Then raised he to his lips,
Whose sweets his Bride had tasted,—only she,—
And blew the conch-shell, drinking (so it seemed)
Embodied glory, by his right hand won.

His warriors knew the note, faced round, and saw 170
Where slept his foes around him, as the Moon
Shines o'er closed lotuses on quiet lakes.
Then on their banners with his blood-stained shafts
Thus wrote the Prince,—“ Your glory Raghu's son
Has taken from you, but your lives he spares
Of his mere mercy !” Resting on his bow,
The garland breaking as he raised his helm,
His brow with sweat-drops moist,—his trembling Bride
He then approached, and spoke :—“ Vidarbha's Child !
Behold our foes, I bid thee : infant hands 180
Might seize their weapons now. Could such as they,
So fighting, win thee from me ? ” Then her face,
Recovering from alarm the foe had caused,
Shone brightly, as a mirror when damp breath
Is wiped away. Rejoicing, yet for shame
She praised him not herself, but by the lips

Of handmaids,—as the fallow thanks the rain,
When early sprinkled, by the peacocks' song.
Then set he his left foot upon the crowns
Of those proud Kings; this done, that faultless Prince 190
Bore off his blooming Bride, whose ringlets bright
The dust from hoofs and wheels had stirred and tinged,—
While like incarnate Victory she shone !

Now came he home, whom with his lovely wife
King Raghu welcomed, knowing all the news
And what had chanced. He then transferred the yoke
Of Kingship to his son, and eager turned
To tread himself the quiet way of Peace :
Such in the Solar line is ever use
For Monarchs when their sons have come to age. 200

CANTO VIII

*Aja's early Happiness ; Death of Indumatî,
and his Lament.*

THUS mighty Raghu gave Prince Aja Earth,
A second bride with fair Indumatî,
While still he wore the sacred marriage-ring.
What others seek by wrong to make their own,
He took submissive from his father's hand,
Not lusting after power. Then Earth with him,
By water hallowed and Vaçishṭha's spells,
In wedlock joined, by exhalations dense
Showed joy untold. The King, anointed such
By Saint deep-learnèd in Atharva texts,
Foes could not hope to vanquish. Sacred Lore
And warlike glory twinned resistless work,
Like Wind and Fire : the people deemed their King
Was Raghu's self restored to second youth ;
For with the Royal State all Kingly grace
He had received. Two things with other two
Shone doubly-bright : his father's fame revived
By Aja, prudent age by vigorous youth.
The newly-subject Earth like virgin-bride

He used with tender love, and curbed his strength, 20
Lest she should be dismayed. His subjects all
Thought each,—“’Tis me the King loves best!” for none
He scorned, as Ocean, wived with countless streams,
Meets all with equal love. Not over-harsh,
Nor yet too lenient, still the golden mean
He followed, causing neighbouring Kings to bow
Without uprooting, as the tender grass
Inclines before the wind. King Raghu then,
Who saw the Kingdom stablished in his son,
As he himself had ruled it, ceased from care 30
Of all things earthly, nay, of Heavenly joys :—
Such still the wont of great Dilîpa’s race,
Who in their green old age make o’er the realm
To sons of equal virtue, while themselves,
Self-centred, tread the bark-clad Hermits’ path.

But when the father sought to take his place
Among the pious band, his new-crowned son,
With head bowed low before him, prayed his Sire
Not so to leave him orphaned. Then the King
Vouchsafed the boon—for well he loved his son, 40
But took not up again his former state,
As snakes resume not sloughs once cast away.

So Raghu entered on life’s latest stage,
And, freed from every care, in safe retreat
Hard by the City dwelt, while daughter-like
The Royal State performed her duteous part.

Now in that Kingly house the reverend Sire

Had chosen Peace ; the Son in vigour ruled.
 Bright as is Heav'n when day's great orb mounts high
 And sinks the moon : so Sire alike and Son 50
 Were both supreme,—one in the realm of war,
 And one of pious work : each wore the dress
 Which best befitted either, in the quest
 Of earthly glory or of Final Bliss.

Then Aja, who was moved to conquer realms
 Not yet subdued, took counsel sage with men
 Deep-versed in statecraft : Raghu companied
 With holy hermits, seeking joys Supreme.
 On throne of justice Aja sat to watch
 His people's weal ; his Sire, with senses quelled, 60
 Slept on pure *Kuṣa*, far from haunts of men,
 And weaned his thoughts from earth. By warlike might
 That smote the Kings around him, this—by thought
 On sacred subjects fixed—smote down the lusts
 Which mortals feel. The younger King burnt up
 The fruits his foes most longed for, while his Sire
 With flame of Holy Lore consumed the deeds
 Which else might bar Salvation. Seeking fruit
 By earthly wisdom, Aja truces made,
 Used other crafts of statesmen :—Ignorance, 70
 Wrath, Virtue, Raghu stemmed to reach calm Bliss,
 And gold he viewed as clods. The new-set King
 Assiduous worked, nor ceased from worthy acts
 Till dawned success ; while plunged in thought his Sire,
 Detached from every earthly bond or wish,

Sent forth his soul to join the Soul Supreme.

Thus in his sphere each watched to quell his foes :—

The one proud Kings, the other worldly thoughts,

(One glory sought, the other Final Bliss,)

And each obtained his end. So Raghu passed,

80

That loving father, years of calm repose :

Then, breaking from the gloomy chains of life,

Devotion joined him to the Changeless Soul.

When this was told to Aja, long he wept,

Then summoned pious hermits, sacred Fire

Laid on the altar, and placed him in earth,

Untouched by fire : then Offerings to the Shades

He from mere love presented,—for 'tis known

That Saints departed need no funeral cake,

Nor claim it from their sons. By Rishis schooled,

90

In Holy Learning perfect, overmuch

He grieved not for that father passed to Heaven ;

But strung his conquering bow, and smiting down

All rival Kings, alone he ruled the World.

Him Earth had won and fond Indumatî

For spouse, the glorious Hero : many gems

Earth gave him, and his mortal bride one son,

Whom, bright as sunshine, famous through the worlds

As Daçaratha, after ages knew

The Sire of Râma, ten-necked Râvaṇ's foe.

100

So paid the King by study, sacrifice,

And fatherhood, that triple debt which men

Owe to the Saints, the Gods, the Blessed Shades,—

And like the Sun shone glorious when he 'scapes
 From misty halo. War's array he used
 To free the oppressed from fear, his Sacred Lore
 Served but to honour Saints, his wealth alike
 He used and virtue for his people's good.

Thus in unclouded happiness he lived,
 But grief lay ambushed. One sad, fatal day, 110
 With loved Indumatî the King, who watched
 His people like a flock, through pleasant groves
 That girt the City strayed, as Çachî's Lord
 And lover, Lord of Maruts, haunts the groves
 That spread round Nandana. Then Nârada,
 Minstrel Divine, who sought Gokarṇa's Lord
 To praise him with his lute, passed through the South
 To northern climes,—while, greedy of the scent,
 The rushing wind bore off the flowery crown
 That decked the lute celestial. Like a tear 120
 From painted eye those flowers shone as they fell
 By bees attended, ravished by the breeze.
 That Heavenly wreath, before whose potent scent
 Shrank shamed the blooming creepers, lighted soft
 Down on the Queen's broad breasts,—which when she felt
 A moment only on her ample chest,
 The King's Beloved paled, and tottering swooned,
 As fails the moonlight when the Moon is hid :
 She lifeless fell, and his life followed hers,
 As lamp-spark falling takes the burning wick 130

Fed with rich oil. Scared by the loud laments
Their followers raised, the lotus-haunting birds
Screamed sympathetic ; they with fans revived
The King, but lifeless lay the Queen : unless
The vital spark be left all help is vain,
All tendance useless. He his Spouse raised up
Like lute untuned, and laid her in his lap,
Fit resting-place : she pale in death reclined,
As in grey dawn the Moon shows weird and wan.

Deep mourned he, tears nigh choked him, his firm mind
Was broken—even as heat intense will melt 141
The rigid iron ; ah ! how much the more
Grief melts men's hearts ! Thus wailed the stricken King :—

“ If Fate by touch of flowers can kill, what dart
May not be deadly when He seeks to slay ?
Or haply Death, to take a tender life
Chose shaft as tender : so, soft flakes of snow
Destroy the yielding lotus. Death perchance
To slay me launched his arrow ; while the tree
Yet stands unharmed, the creeper smitten falls. 150
Ah, why—who oft forgavest wrong I did—
Dost thou unwarning shut those lips from me,
Who now have done no wrong ? Thou doubt'st my love,
O smiling Lady ! wherefore, scorning fraud,
(My leave unasked) thou took'st thy way to Heaven.
My maimèd life pursued thee, but alone
Has now returned ; why can not I alone
Bear all the grief ? Still on thy face, fair Spouse,

Tired love has left its trace, but soul is fled :

Alas, how transient are the lives of men !

160

“No thought had I to vex thee,—why hast thou
Left me forlorn? Thee only have I loved,
Though Earth too calls me Lord,—Lord but in name.

Ah, stately Lady, now thy rippling curls,

Bee-coloured, wreathed with flowers, wave in air,

And bid me hope that yet thou wilt return

Again to bless my life :—wake soon, O Love !

Soon bid my sorrow cease ! the Snowy Mount

Has caves lit up by plants that nightly shed

Light through them : so return to melt my gloom !

170

I grieve to see thy face, which locks dispersed

Disfigure, mute—once eloquent, as when

A lonely lotus slumbers, stilled the hum

Of bees that sleep there. Night regains her Moon,

The Cuckoo finds his mate, and parting's pangs

Are cured by meeting :—how canst thou, O Love,

Destroy my life by leaving me for aye ?

“Thy slender limbs scarce rested as they lay
On couch of freshest leaves :—how wilt thou then,

Fair Lady, bear the roughness of the pyre,

180

All bristling? See ! this zone, which first received

The tones of love, is mute, since thou liest still,

As 'twere a sorrowing friend that ev'n in death

Attends a loved one,—if thou wake no more !

Thy dulcet tones the Cuckoos have assumed,

To Swans hath passed thy slow and languorous gait,

Thy glance of love Gazelles now use, thy grace
The Creepers waving in the wind :—these all
Thou leftest me when soaring up to Heaven,
Yet soothe they not my heart, weighed down with woe 190
At thy departing. Didst not thou betrothe
This scented Mango to his Creeper-bride?
How leave them then unwed, deserting me
Untimely? Shall these hands weave funeral wreaths
Of that *Açoka's* blossoms, which thyself
Hast coaxed, made coy, and fostered lovingly,
To deck thy ringlets? Lady of fair limb!
The *Açoka* mourns thee, tearful shedding flowers,
To miss thy graceful steps, thy tinkling gait,
For ever lost. O sweet-voiced Queen of Love! 200
That zone is yet unfinished, which with me
Thou half hast fashioned of these fragrant blooms,
Fresh-scented as thy breath: how canst thou sleep,
And leave thy task undone? In joy, in grief,
Thy maidens shared; and this, thy noble Child,
Shows like a waxing Moon; my constant love
Is for thee only;—stern and pitiless,
Thou leavest all, unloving. Joy is sped,
Endurance broken: cheerful songs have ceased;
Spring charms no longer, gauds are laid aside; 210
My couch henceforth is widowed, desolate.
House-mistress, Friend, Beloved, Counsellor,
In all Love's arts apt pupil! cruel Death,
Bereaving me of thee, bereaves of all!

O Liquid-eyed ! to thee my loving lips
Gave all their sweetness ; canst thou bear to drink
The lukewarm draughts, all troubled by my tears,
Wherewith we tempt the Sires? Now thou art gone,
No more has prosperous course my widowed life
Which owned no other joys, but all on thee
Was centred !” So the King with grieving words
Mourned for his Love, while sympathetic trees
Condoling shed their gums, like floods of tears.

220

Then hardly from his lap his loyal men
Removed the Queen, now dead, and reverent laid
On pyre of sandalwood with aloes mixed,
Clad rich for Death. His royal heart thought scorn
That men should say, “ A King by private grief
Sank overwhelmed !” So, though he cared no more
To live his life, yet—fearing men’s reproach—
He dared not mount the pyre that now consumed
His Spouse, but ’twas not love of life withheld.

230

Ten days he spent, given o’er to sorrow’s sway,
Then in that grove for ever left his dear,—
Wise King, whom now her virtues only charm,
Since life was fled. Dejected, widowed, sad
(As when Night yields to Morning pale and wan),
He entered his fair City,—and beheld
The tears that ladies shed, as ’twere the floods
Of grief that overflowed his sorrowing heart.

240

Now to his Teacher in the Hermitage,
For sacrifice prepared, the grief was known

Which numbed his senses : pitying he sent
 Wise words of comfort (since himself was stayed)
 By well-taught pupil, who spake gravely thus :—

“ Absorbed in sacrifice the perfect Saint,
 Though well he knows thy grief, perforce must send,
 Not come, to teach thee patience, and restore
 The calm thou ownedst ere this heavy blow
 Fell on thee. Me he sends to brace thy heart, 250
 O pious King, and speak thee words of peace !
 O much-enduring Hero, lay to heart
 His words of comfort ! He whose perfect sight
 Unchecked sees all that has been, all that is,
 Or shall be in the fortunes of men's souls,
 Bids tell thee how, when Trīṇabindu's toils
 Of old made Indra fear, the God sent forth
 To check his arduous penance Hariṇî,
 The Nymph Celestial. Then the Saint, in wrath
 That like world-whelming wave flowed o'er his soul, 260
 Else patient, cursed her wanton charms, displayed
 Delusive,—bidding her be born 'mongst men.
 Then bowed she trembling, humbly sought his grace,
 And pleaded the compulsion of her Lord
 On her a servant,—till the Saint forgave,
 And said :—‘ When thou shalt see Heaven's flowers once more,
 The curse I spake shall end ! ’ In Bhoja's house
 The Nymph was born : her thou didst win for Bride,
 Who long has made thee happy,—till at length
 Those Heavenly flowers proclaimed the Curse's end : 270

Fate called her home, she could not choose but go !

“Oh, mourn her then no longer ! Fate’s decree
Brings grief for joy : let Earth have all thy love,
That regal Bride beloved of Kingly souls !
In prosperous times, O King, no vaunting words
E’er passed thy lips, while perfect Sacred Lore
Shone in thy patience ; now that sorrow comes,
Be man and quell it ! Though thou die with her,
Scarce shouldst thou find her more ; for souls of men
Take fateful paths that vary with their deeds.

280

Quit then thy grief ; prepare the funeral cake,
Nor weep preparing,—since the tears of friends
Disturb departed souls. Know, earthly life
Is bondage to the Soul, which Death sets free :
If then one breathe an instant, and depart,
His gain is highest : only fools regard
As deadly darts infixed the death of friends ;
The constant-minded know that Death draws out
Life’s painful barb, and opens up for men
The gate of Bliss. Thou know’st the soul must meet,
Then leave the destined body : shall the wise
Grieve when the soul casts off those coils of sense
Which bind in life ? Fall never, wisest King,
Before unreasoning grief, as fools may fall :
Trees bend, but rocks stand firm when tempests rage !”

290

“’Tis well !” he said assenting, bowed, and blessed
The Saint departing ; but the words of peace
Took on his sorrow-laden heart no hold,

So to the Sage returned. The King bereaved,
To rear his son to manhood, hardly bore
Eight widowed years, which only dreams relieved
When she appeared, or marble forms that mocked
Her matchless beauty. Sorrow's dart had struck
Deep-rooted in his soul, as strikes a Fig
Deep roots in palace-roofs : when sickness came
To end his life, he welcomed its stern dint,
As one that set him free to join his Love.

300

First perfectly he trained his warrior-son
The folk to guard, to smite the stubborn foe :
Then, pining sore to quit the frame diseased
That fettered him, the pious King resolved,
Renouncing earthly food and drink, to win
Bliss Endless. Wherefore to that holy place
He went where Gangâ meets Sarâyû's stream,
There shed his body, and regained his Spouse,
More beauteous than on earth :—now in the groves
Of Nandana they love and live for aye !

310

CANTO IX

*The Prosperous Reign of Daçaratha, and his
Fatal Hunting.*

So mighty Daçaratha to his Sire
Succeeded, self-controlled : in Koçala,
Of royal Sages first, he ruled his folk,
Who knew him noble Kârtikeya's peer
In righteous glory, spreading wide his power.

Great Sages tell that Indra and this King
Poured forth their bounties duly : Bali's foe
And he who sprang of Manu's royal line,
Untiring, 'mongst whose folk no illness set
Its foot, while Earth brought forth her generous fruit 10
For him, the pride of Aja, peaceful King.
Broad Earth's ten regions Raghu had subdued,
Succeeding Aja made them fairer still,
And after him his son, that ruler sage,
Increased its lustre. Just, dispensing wealth,
Chastising ill men,—Yama, Varuṇa,
He rivalled, and Kuvera : as the Sun
Drives Dawn before him, so him, self-restrained
For Glory's winning, neither women's love,

Nor dice, nor youth's fair spring-time led astray, 20
Nor wine moon-mirroring. No abject word,
Not even to Lord Indra, would he use ;
Nor, even jesting, falsely speak ; nor foes
Would he with passion meet, nor nurse revenge.

Earth's Kings received from Aja's son the fates
That raised them or destroyed ; for he was friend
To such as did his bidding, harsh and stern
To all who dared defy. He with strong bow
Went conquering in one car sea-girdled Earth,—
While elephants and horses, huge and swift, 30
Did but proclaim his triumph. Thus the World
Alone he, mighty archer, quite subdued,
Rich as Kuvera, while the thunderous sea
Beat drums auspicious. Indra with his bolt,
One-hundred-pointed, clipped the mountains' wings :
He, lotus-faced, poured forth from sounding bow
A rain of arrows, breaking hostile ranks.

By hundreds Kings did homage,—Maruts so
Bow down to glorious Indra,—while the pearls
That decked their diadems fresh lustre won 40
From his bright toe-nails. Wives disconsolate
Of foemen pitied he, whose infant sons
The counsellors taught to bow : so turned he back
From Ocean's shores to where Ayodhyâ's towers,
As Alakâ's resplendent, ruled the plain.

Yet, though o'er Earth he power supreme had won,
Nor rival raised his canopy towards heaven,

He sank not back in sloth, whose glory blazed
 Like fire, or moon-like beamed : for still he thought
 The pinnacle of fame was not yet won.

50

Clear-minded King, he made the river-banks
 With golden altar-posts to flash, where flowed
 Sarâyû's streams or Tamasâ,—and doffed
 His crown to sacrifice the Horse, and spent
 All wealth late yielded by the conquered World.

Such Çiva's self might seem, in deerskin clad,
 With *Kuça* girdled, staff and horn in hand,
 With voice restrained, and dight for sacrifice,—

Incarnate, crowned with matchless lustre, pure,

By due ablutions cleansed, and fit to move

60

Among the blessèd Gods. He Indra served,
 But served none other. Vishṇu, Highest Lord,
 And him from Raghu sprung, the poor man's stay,

Did lotus-handed Lakshmî serve, for so

She kept her vow. But he, the mighty Lord,

Oft side by side with Indra led Heaven's host,

And by his archery freed from fear the hearts

Of maids Divine, who hymned his warlike fame.

Oft too that matchless Hero, bowman skilled,

In front of Indra fighting, laid with blood

70

Of vanquished Demons dust that veiled the Sun.

The King, whose arrows pierced his foemen's breasts,

Espoused the virtuous daughters of three Kings,—

Of Koçala, Kekaya, Magadha,—

As rivers from the mountains wed the Sea.

So, threefold wedded, skilled to smite the foe,
Like Indra's self he seemed, with Virtues three
Come down to earth, to rule the world in peace !

Came in his season Spring, that gracious Lord,
In might all-worshipful, the peer alike 80
Of Gods of Earth, and Sky, and Wealth, and Sea,
To deck the world with new-born flowers. The Sun
Turned towards Kuvera's realms his steeds, and cleared
The morning-hours of frost, and left the slopes
Of well-loved Malaya. First burst the buds,
Then sprouted fresh green twigs, with hum of bees
And cuckoos' wooing note :—through tree-clad glade
In order due thus Spring revealed himself.

At Winter's ending smiled the glowing year :
The *Kinçuka* took on her wealth of buds, 90
Like red scars laid by fingers of a bride,
With wine deep-drunk and passion, on her spouse.
Not yet the Sun dispelled, but made less keen
The frost by women hated, swollen-lipped
From biting, while their zones slipped down from waists
That shrank with cold. From southern Malaya
Fresh buds of mango, shaken by warm winds,
Learned arts enticing,—in ascetic breasts
By charm of waving twigs to fix Love's power.
As suitors sought the King, whose fortunate rule 100
His virtues doubled, lavish to the good,
So to the lotus-clusters in the lakes—

Fresh-blown by present Spring—swarmed bees and birds.

Açoka's spring-like flower was lamp of Love,

And tender blossoms which their fair brides wore

As ear-drops, lit in youthful wooers' hearts

Love's gentle fires. Now *Jhintî's* purple flowers,

In honey rich, fresh picture from Spring's hand

Of dainty beauty, stirred the bees to hum

In joyous concert. Wine from beauteous lips

110

Made fertile bursting blooms, which fragrant blush

On *Vakulas*, where long-drawn swarms of bees

Greedy of sweetness clung. Fresh-blossoming glades

The early Cuckoo haunted with sweet notes,

Like short and broken words of loving brides.

In garden-borders tuneful creepers sang

With pleasing hum of bees, while tender flowers

Seemed gleaming teeth, and wind-shook buds were hands

To beat the dance's time. Fair women quaffed

The grateful wine, which stirred to wanton grace,

120

More fragrant than Love's ally, *Vakula*,

That never fosters strife. House-tanks, made glad

By lotus-flowers and waterfowls' soft notes,

Shone bright as women's faces lit with smiles,

Whose tinkling zones hang loose. Thin grew the Night,

Close-pressed by Spring; her face's lustre paled

As waxed the Moon;—as pales a maiden's cheek

Whose lover fails her. Now the Moon's clear beams

In cloudless lustre heal Love's sweet fatigue,

And sharpen Kâma's darts, the God who wields

130

The flower-strung bow, his flag a crocodile.
That bloom which glows like fire oblation-fed,—
Fit ear-drop for the Goddess of the wood,—
Soft-petalled, limber-tendrilled, lovers gave,
And brides twined in their locks. Shone *Tila*-trees,
Where clustered bees by contrast heightened charms
Of flowers, as ointment charms of fairy eyes,
Or patch on woman's cheek. *New-mallikâ*,
The tree's fair spouse, slim, graceful, honey-sweet
With scented blossoms, fresh red sprouts her lips, 140
Ensnared men's hearts. Fond lovers welcomed Love
With garments red as dawn, and barley-heads
Made ear-rings, Cuckoos' song,—his whole array.
The full-blown flowers of *Tila*, clustering, shone
(The pollen white contrasting with black swarms
Of bees) not less than bright pearls, intertwined
With ladies' locks. Swift chased the honied tribes
That fragrant pollen, which the zephyrs light
Stirred, Love's own token, by that doughty Lord
Laid on the face of Spring, to keep her fair. 150
Now sought fair women, languishing though strong,
The swings Spring brought them, that their lovers' necks
They might unblamèd clasp, scarce touching ropes
That bound their seats. "Be bold!" "Ah, cease from
strife!"
"Life's pleasure-time comes once, nor e'er returns!"
So Kokils sang Love's mind, and yielding maids
Their passion owned.

Then he, the King, high peer
Of Vishṇu, Spring, and Love, the feast enjoyed
With his fair wives to fulness. Next, he longed
To know a hunter's joys. The Chace gives skill 160
To cleave swift-moving marks, by outward signs
To ken both fear and rage : the hunter's will,
Fatigue despising, braces all his frame :
Wherefore his Council much approved the thought.
Dressed then in hunter's garb that Sunlike King,
With quiver on broad neck, obscured the sky
With dust of horses' hoofs ; with woodland wreaths
His locks he braided, wearing mail of green,
His ear-rings trembling from the horses' speed.
So through deer-haunted glades he glanced, and Gods 170
Of woods, who veiled their forms in slender vines,
Black bees their eyes, marked well the bright-eyed King,
Whose righteous rule spread joy through Koçala,
And watched him passing. Men with dogs and nets
He sent before him, robbers fled, and fires
Were quenched ; the soil was firm with plenteous wells,
And deer and birds and bison swarmed around.
As Indra's bow with golden bowstring armed
Nabhangā bears, so bore that King his bow
Well-strung, his passions quelled, whose angry twang 180
Enraged the lion. Broke a herd of deer,
Led by a twelve-tined stag, where suckling fawns
Oft checked the fleeing does, while *Kuça* blades
Hung from their muzzles. Them the well-horsed King

O'ertook, and from his quiver drew a shaft :
They burst their ranks, their troubled glances seemed
To light up all the wood, as breezes fling
From sombre lotus-leaves the balmy drops.

Like Indra skilled in bowcraft, passed the King :—
If hind-protected stag he'd marked for death 190
(His love-swayed soul with pity smit)—he checked
The shaft he thought to loose. At other deer
When he would shoot, his firm-clenched hand, full drawn
Up to the ear, as of itself unclasped,—
Moved by the liquid orbs that rolled in fear,
Recalling loving looks of tender wives.
A path he followed, where the half-chewed grass
Had fallen, and broad wet footprints clearly showed
Where ran a herd of boars, escaped with speed
From muddy pools they rolled in. Bristling high, 200
They charged him boldly, while with death-fraught shafts
(His chest slight-bending from his horse) he shot
So dexterously they knew not they were pinned
To trees 'gainst which they leaned. One shaft he sped,
Which in a charging bison's eyeball lodged,
Slew the fell beast, and, dashing through the flesh,
Dropt to the ground, its feathers clean of blood.
The fearless King, whose hand long use had trained,
Rained deadly arrows down the yawning throats,
As from their caves to tear him tigers sprang, 210
Like blooming *Asan*-sprouts by tempest broke.

To slay the lions crouching in their dens,

He roused them first with thunderous bowstring's twang,
 Harsh-sounding,—for he grudged the Royal name,
 Which—prize of valour—'mong the beasts they bore :
 Them, known the fiercest foes of elephants,
 Whose forehead-pearls they tear with crooked claw,
 Kakuttha's son shot down, and paid the debt
 He owed his mighty servants, staunch in war.
 The *yâks* he next pursued with arrows keen, 220
 Drawn to his ear ; seized their white tails as prize,—
 That royal badge which oft from Kings he tore ;
 Then let them lie. At peacock splendid-tailed,
 Though next his horse it rose, he aimed no shaft,—
 So like it seemed to braided hair, his Queen's,
 With bright flowers intertwined, when loving sport
 Had loosed its tangles. Heavy drops of sweat,
 Which bathed his brows,—fit streams from huntsman's toil,
 The dewdrop-laden breeze absorbed, which wooed
 The new-born buds to burst. With skilful wiles 230
 Coquetting thus, the Chace enthralled the King,
 By service made more loving, wiping out
 All thought of graver duties, since he cast
 The weight of Kingship on his Council sage.
 The night he passed on couch of flowers and twigs,
 At times unguarded ; phosphorescent plants
 Alone gave light ; at dawn he woke refreshed,
 When sounded in his ear like deep-toned drums
 His elephants loud-trumpeting, and joyed
 To hear the birds' sweet warbling, tuneful bards 240

To sing his praises ; thus his days sped past.

But—so Fate willed it—one unlucky day,
Unmarked by all his train he tracked a stag
Through forest-paths, and reached the Tamasâ
(His horse all foaming, spent, foredone with heat),—
Whose banks grave Hermits haunt. There on his ear
From waterpot one filled fell gurgling sounds,
As of an elephant that quenched his thirst ;
The King his arrow loosed, which hurtling sped ;
That act the Law forbids to virtuous Kings, 250
Yet he transgressed :—when passion blinds, a Sage,
Though versed in Sacred Lore, will tread ill paths.
“ Oh, Father ! ” rang a cry : grief-struck, the King
Pressed on to find its source among the reeds,
And found a Muni’s son, with jar in hand,
Pierced by an arrow ; like a dart deep pain
Transfixed the King’s own heart. Dismounting then,
The high-descended Hero asked his race,—
When, propped against his jar, with faltering tongue
He named his sire—no Brâhman, though a Sage. 260

Then, as desired, he bore the wounded boy
(The barb not drawn) to where his parents blind
Were waiting, and rehearsed the dreadful hap
Which he unwitting brought upon their son.
Sore grieving did those parents from his breast
Draw out the shaft which murderous hand had sped ;
The lad expired : next, washing his old hands
In floods of tears, the father cursed the King,

And said :—"When age comes on thee, for thy son
Thou too shalt die of grief, as now I die !"

270

Thus, as a snake provoked its venom pours,
He vented fatal words ; the offending King
Meek answered :—"Saintly Sage ! not all in wrath
Thy curse has smit me, whom no lovely son
With lotus-face has charmed : so fire consumes
Corn-bearing land, yet from the sterile ash
Makes seed the more productive."—So they spake.

Next said he to the Saint :—"I well deserve
For ill-deed done that thou shouldst take my life :
How may I serve thy need ?"—The Saint required
Pure fire and kindling-wood ; for with his wife
Their son he fain would follow to the pyre.
Then came the escort, and in haste the King
Did as they bade him ; then betook him home,
His courage damped by sin. The curse he bore,
Deep-graven on his heart, fell root of woe,
As Ocean in its womb bears quenchless fire.

280

CANTO X

*Vishṇu, invoked by the Gods, becomes incarnate as Râma,
to destroy the Tyrant Râvaṇa.*

LONG ruled the King, in fadeless splendour robed,
Like Indra mighty—till ten thousand years
Were well-nigh sped. Yet gained he not the wealth,
“Son” named, to pay the debt he owed the Sires,
That light which swiftly chases sorrow's gloom.
Long stayed the King, and yearned for grace divine
To give him issue,—Ocean thus of old,
As yet unchurned, delayed to yield its pearls.
Then pious Priests, ascetic, self-controlled,
By Ṛishyaçṛṅga led, began the Rite
To win the King a son to heal his care.
At that same time, by Fate's supreme decree,
The Gods, by Râvaṇ vexed, to Vishṇu went
As heat-worn wayfarers to shade resort.

10

Soon as they reached wide Ocean, the Supreme
Woke from his sleep, foreboding good success
By timeous welcome. Him the Gods beheld,
On Çesha seated, where around his limbs

The flashing gems set in its sparkling hood
 Shed radiance, while bright Lakshmî, lotus-throned, 20
 Held in her lap His feet, and wrapped her zone
 In silk, and spread her hands like clinging vines.

There clear as full-blown lotus beamed his eyes,
 Like new-born Sun his robes—calm autumn day
 He seemed, as gracious on their sight He rose.
 The jewel Kaustubha on his broad chest
 He wore, that pearl of Ocean, in whose rays
 Shines out the wonder of His breast, the glass
 Where Lakshmî's beauties play. His branching arms,
 With gems of Heaven bedecked, amid the waves 30
 Like Pârijâta seemed ; while living darts,
 That paled the cheeks of Daityas' wives, upraised
 Their song triumphant. There the King of Birds,
 With talons sheathed, relaxing warlike rage
 Against the Snake, scarred by the lightning-stroke,
 Attended watchful. Thus with shining eyes,
 Mild-beaming as He woke from fateful sleep,
 The Saints by Bhṛigu led He greeted well—
 Who first had greeted Him with lowly words.

Then falling prostrate, Him the Gods extolled, 40
 Who smote the Demon-host, who speech and thought
 Transcends alike, Praise-worthy :—" Hail ! " they cried,
 " Threefold yet One, who first didst all things frame,
 Upholdest now, and wilt at last destroy !
 As rain from Heaven is one, yet forms diverse
 In various lands assumes, so Thou, unchanged

In essence, workest various ; Thou all worlds,
Thyself unmeasured, metest ; feeling none,
Thou fillest all desires ; Unconquered, all
Thou conquerest ; veiled Thyself, Thou dost display 50
The World of seeming. Thee men know far off,
Yet dwelling in their hearts ; from passion free,
Primal Ascetic ; quick to sympathise,
Though Thee no pain can touch ; by Age's hand
Untouched art Thou, yet Ancient ; all unknown,
All-Knowing ; Womb of all things, sprung from none ;
Supreme, Thou know'st no ruler ; One, yet manifold !

“Thee all adore : praised in the Seven Hymns,
On Oceans seven Thou sleep'st—Whose lips breathe out
The seven Fires, sole Refuge of seven Worlds. 60
Four-branched is knowledge, Ages four bound Time,
Four orders hath mankind, from Thy four mouths
Proceed all worlds. Oh, heart's resplendent goal !
For Thee ascetics yearn, their lusts subdued
By painful exercise, and seek from Thee
The Good Supreme. Unborn, yet taking flesh ;
Not seeking triumph, Thou dost smite Thy foes ;
Thou sleep'st, yet watchest ever :—who can tell
Thy being's truth ? The binding chains of sense,
Of hearing and all else, at will Thou tak'st ; 70
Endurest harshest toil,—dost shield Thy worlds,—
Yet dwellest high apart. The ways of Bliss,
Diversely shown and taught, all lead to Thee,
As Gangâ's parted streams seek Ocean's breast.

“Who fix their hearts on Thee, and trust to Thee
 All working, free from lust,—these find in Thee
 That happy way which none need travel more.
 Thy greatness none can grasp, though in the worlds
 Thou clothe Thyself in matter : who shall tell
 Thy worship forth, which Holy Writ alone 80
 And thought profound can reach? The soul of man
 Thou purgest wholly, if his thought on Thee
 Be purely fixed : how fruitful then must be
 Soul-union with Thee ! Yet as Ocean far
 Outshines the gems he hides, as o’er his rays
 The Sun shines glorious, so Thy greatness, Lord,
 Transcends our halting praise ! Nor want hast Thou,
 Nor aught allures Thee ; Birth Thou tak’st and Toil,
 That through the Worlds Salvation may be wrought !
 Here cease we from Thy praise, exhausted, weak : 90
 Thou art exhaustless, boundless spreads Thy might !”

So hymned the Gods that Soul unthinkable,
 And strove to paint His essence, not exalt.

The Almighty Lord propitious greeted well
 The radiant Gods, who told their anxious fear
 Lest Earth should sink o’erflowed by Râkshas-wave.
 To them the Blessed spake, with thunderous voice
 That stilled the Ocean-roar, re-echoing
 Through sea-girt caverns :—so the Ageless Lord
 In hallowed tones replied, the while His words 100
 All-holy half-conferred the promised boon.

As Gangâ, heavenly stream, springs from His foot,
 And gleams with foam, so gleamed the mighty word
 Lit by His shining teeth—as thus He spake:—

“Well know I how the Râkshas has smit down
 Your glorious might, as Ignorance in man
 Annihilates both Truth and Passion's force.
 And as a good man's heart unwitting sin
 Disturbs and tortures, so with Demon-might
 He tortures the Three Worlds. Great Indra's prayers 110
 I needed not to rouse my will to help,
 For our desire is one, as Wind and Fire
 Are eager allies. Yea, in ages past,
 When nine were smitten with his own great sword,
 The Giant's tenth head stood, a destined prey
 For my resistless Quoit. Long since his fate
 Had overta'en him, but for Brahmâ's boon :
 His insolence I suffered, as a tree
 Long bears insulting serpents. For of yore,
 Pleased with his rites austere, from Brahmâ's hand 120
 The Demon won this boon, to dread no foe
 Of Heavenly race—he feared not arm of man.

“Incarnate then as Daçaratha's son,
 With biting arrow I his clustering heads
 Will cleave like lotus-clusters, sacrificed
 Upon the foughten field. Thereafter soon
 The holy offerings which pure priests present,
 By skulking ghosts untainted, once again
 Ye shall enjoy ! And you, ye Saints, who now,

In cars celestial riding through the sky, 130
 Seek refuge in dark clouds, dismayed no more
 At sight of Pushpaka, resume your calm !
 The captive brides of Heaven, by Râvaṇ's rapes
 No more disturbed, their locks shall now unbind."

Then melted Viṣṇu's cloud, whence blessed words
 Like rain of nectar on the parchèd fields
 Of hopes of Gods, by Râvaṇ scorched, had fallen.

But Indra and his peers in subtle shapes
 Went after the great God, whose mighty will
 Was bent to aid them, ev'n as blossoming trees 140
 Waft pollen on the path of favouring gales.

Now when the Rites were ended, which the King
 Performed to win him offspring, sudden came
 From out the altar-fire a Form Divine,
 And awed the Priests. High in His hands he bore
 A golden dish of mingled rice and milk,
 And scarce could bear, for there the Almighty lay.
 That draught God-given drank the King, as erst
 Did Indra drink the essential Nectar, churned
 From Ocean's heart. How excellent that King, 150
 In virtue eminent, without a peer,
 From whom the Soul Supreme now sought His birth !

The sacred draught, where Viṣṇu's self lay hid,
 To his two Queens he parted, as the Sun
 His morning-beams divides 'twixt Sky and Earth.
 Kauçalyâ high he prized, Kaikeyî loved,

And fain would have Sumitrâ loved by both,
 As well they knew : so, gracing their wise Lord,
 Each with Sumitrâ shared the holy milk,
 Nor grudged to share ; for she alike to both 160
 Showed equal love, as seeks a honey-bee
 Both fragrant streams that from the mighty brows
 Of elephants exude. All three conceived :
 And in their wombs divided grew the God,
 As grows a lotus quickened by Sun-rays.
 Their time went on : with paly gold they beamed,
 As gleams the corn blade while the golden grain
 Swells in the ear. By night in happy dreams
 They saw themselves girt round by sworded dwarfs,
 With conch, and club, and bow, and quoit ; they rode 170
 (It seemed) on Garuḍa, who spread in air
 The gauzy glory of his golden wings,
 And in swift flight drew in his wake the clouds.
 And Lakshmî served them, wearing on her breast
 Kaustubha lent by Vishṇu, waving soft
 Her lotus-fan ; while all the Saints supreme,
 The holy Seven, fresh bathed in Gangâ's flood,
 In solemn chant extolled the Holiest Name.

These dreams they told their Lord, who joyed to hear,
 And, proud of promised offspring, thought his lot 180
 Transcended even great Prajâpati's ;
 For in their wombs the Soul Supreme now dwelt,
 One Essence, self-divided, manifold,
 Like moonbeams shimmering on a quiet lake.

So when her time was come the chaste chief Queen
 Brought forth a son, Sun fit to banish gloom,
 As phosphorescent plants receive at night
 The dying sunlight. But the King, rejoiced
 To see his winsome beauty, "Râma" named
 His son, chief blessing to a longing world. 190
 He, lamp of Raghu's line, of peerless beam
 Outshone the brightness of the chamber-lights,
 Which paled before him. Lightened now, the Queen,
 With Râma cradled near her, shone as shines—
 Slim in the autumn—Gangâ, lily-banked.
 Kaikeyî bore a son, with beauty dowered,
 Great Bharat, whose reflected loveliness
 Made her more fair, as Fortune is enhanced
 By virtuous Conduct. Sumitrâ brought forth
 Twins, Lakshman and Çatrughna :—Foresight so 200
 And Temperance Wisdom fully-followed bears.

Now stainless showed Creation, and the Earth
 Displayed her virtues : Heaven to Earth came down
 In train of the Supreme. At Vishnu's birth,
 The Four-faced God, those regions breathed anew
 With purest gales, where erst fell Râvaṇ's dread
 Had cowed the Gods. Fire rising clear of smoke,
 And Sun in cloudless sky, shook sorrow off,
 Who late had groaned beneath the Giant's yoke.

Then shed the Fortune of the Râkshasas 210
 Hot tears, that fell as jewels from the crowns
 Ten-headed Râvaṇ wore. Through all high Heaven

The drums celestial preluded, on earth,
 The royal trumpets hailed the Princes' birth.
 The Tree of Paradise rained down its blooms
 On palace-roof, fit preface to the rites
 That Fortunes high demand, with wreaths from Heaven.

Cleansed as the Law required, with fostering care
 The Princes grew, while grew their Father's joy,
 As 'twere their elder brother. Self-restraint,
 Inborn, by modest actions still increased,
 As, fed with fragrant unguents, Fire's bright flame
 More brilliant shows. They four, harmoniously—
 Not envying each the other—nobly graced
 Great Raghu's blameless line, as each in turn
 The seasons four adorn the groves of Heaven,
 So love fraternal ruled ; but closest ties
 To Râma Lakshman bound, while Çatrughna
 With Bharat went, by love peculiar joined.
 Yet was not either pair dissevered from
 That other : Wind with Fire is closest joined,
 And Moon with Ocean—yet this breeds no strife.

220

230

True Princes of their people, splendidly
 They bore them, yet not haughtily,—and won
 All men's great love,—as at hot summer's end
 Days of dark cloud are pleasant. Gloriously
 So shone the King's four sons, as though to Earth
 Came Virtue, Wealth, and Joy, and Final Bliss.
 Their Father well they loved : by virtuous deeds

They made him glad, as the Four Seas with pearls
Served him, sole Monarch of Four Continents.
As with his tusks Heaven's mighty elephant
Breaks the sword-edges of the Daitya-host,
As kingcraft wins success by skilful wiles,
As by His league-long arms great Vishṇu's self
Shines glorious,—so by these four sons Divine
Shone the great Monarch o'er his world-wide realm !

CANTO XI

*Râma's Triumph and Marriage with Sîtâ, and his Defeat of
Paraçu Râma.*

HEAR now my tale :—While Râma still was young,
And wore a boy's dark curls, came Kauçika
To beg him from the King, those foes to curb
Who marred his sacrifice : in hero-souls
Mere age is not regarded. Him the King,
Though hardly he had won him, honouring
The perfect Sage, with Lakshman gave at once :
No suppliant ere went back ungratified
From Lord of Raghu's race, not though he asked
As boon the Monarch's life. Forthwith the King
Bade deck the highways for their passing out,
Forthwith the clouds wind-driven arched the sky,
And rained down flowers. That mighty warrior-pair,
Swift to obey their Father's will, bent low
Before his feet, and as they bowed his tears
Fell on them passing forth to far-off toils.

10

Now, deeming that the Saint had only craved
Râma with Lakshman following, the great King

His all-prevailing prayers bestowed as guard,
But not an armèd host. The archer-boys, 20
Their locks bedewed with tears their Father shed,
Went with the Saint, the people's anxious looks
Half-shading all their way. The Hero-pair,
Their mothers leaving, kissed their royal feet,
Then followed where the glorious Saint led on,—
Like summer months that course behind the Sun.
Childlike, unsteady paced they, fair to see,
With lissom arms like crested waves that dance,
As streams, when rain-clouds gather, work and whirl,
As suits their name. Till now they only trode 30
Smooth inlaid floors, yet by the potent spells,
Balâ, Atibalâ named, which the Saint
Had taught them on the road, they walked untired
As at their mother's side. Time-olden tales,
Told by their Father's friend, in legend skilled,
So lifted them and carried, scarce they felt
That now they walked—nor missed a chariot's ease.

The lakes sweet waters gave, and birds gay songs,
Winds scented pollen waved, and clouds spread shade
For them so passing. More than lakes that stretch 40
Bright with the lotus, more than restful trees,
They beamed on hermits' eyes, and cheered their hearts.
The grove of penance when with lifted bow
Sweet Râma entered, by his lovely shape—
But not by wanton act—he showed like Love
Whom Çiva scorched. Then passing on the way

Which thrice-accursèd Târakâ laid waste,
(For so the Saint had taught them), all in sport
They bent their bows and strung them. At the sound
The Demon-maid appeared, black as dark night 50
When wanes the moon—her ear-drops polished skulls,
That on her swarthy neck gleamed white as cranes
Lined 'gainst a dense cloud-bank. On Râma then
She swooped, and rushing shook the wayside trees,
In ghostly grave-clothes clad, with gruesome screech,
As whirlwind issuing from a charnel-house.

But Râma, when he marked her onslaught fell,—
One lean arm raised, men's entrails hanging low
Down to her waist—at once let fly his shaft,
Nor shamed to slay a woman. Such a wound 60
His arrow in her flinty bosom made,
That Death therethrough among the Demon-hosts
First won an entrance. For the arrow cleft
Her heart ; she clanging fell, and shook the Earth ;
Not only so, but Râvan's kingdom too
Her falling shook—the Master of the worlds.
Struck to the heart by lovely Râma's shaft
Resistless, spite of all her horrid charms,
Her sandal-wood and gore, the Demon-queen
Passed to the home where Death reigns Lord of life. 70
When Târakâ was slain, the Saint, well-pleased
With Râma's prowess, gave the missile dread,
Spell-wielded, Demon-slaying,—as the Sun
Gives to the Sun-gem flaming fire to hold.

Thereafter Râma, coming to the grove
 Once hallowed by the Dwarf, as told the Saint,
 Unwitting of his former life, was nathless seized
 With eager longing. Thence the Sage passed on
 To where himself did penance, where his host
 Of pupils sacrificed, and as in prayer 80
 The tree-tops lowly bowed, and deer looked up
 To greet their coming. There the Princely boys
 Stood firm to guard the duly-cleansèd Saint
 From all disturbing foes, as Moon and Sun
 Alternate rising with their radiance save
 The world from blinding darkness. Sudden fell
 A terror on the priests, for they beheld
 The altar-floor defiled with blood-gouts, broad
 As *Bandhujîva* blossoms—at which sight
 They ceased their pious rites, and cast away 90
 The sacrificial ladles. Instantly
 Upgazing, Râma from his quiver drew
 His arrow, saw in air a Demon-host
 With banners waving, fanned by vulture's wings.
 Then at the two Chiefs only, not the rest,
 He launched his shaft : so Vishṇu's bird, whose might
 Mates Çesha, Serpent-King, deigns not to war
 On water-snakes. Skilled archer, on his string
 He laid the keen, swift shaft, the Wind-god's child,
 And at Mârîcha loosed it ; like a stone, 100
 Or withered leaf, the ponderous Demon fell,
 The second leader then, Subâhu named,

Who flitted to and fro, by magic art,
With steel-shod shafts the cunning Archer smote,
And gave him to the woodland birds a prey.

Then, freed from fear and unimpeded now,
The pious Priests praised both the hero-boys,
Next in due order all the sacred rites
Performed for their great Chief, to silence vowed.
He, purified and hallowed, solemnly
Blessed both the Princes, bowing reverently
With waving locks, and on them laid his hand,
Pierced by the holy grass :—Age blessing Youth.

110

But now the King of Mithilâ had made
A mighty sacrifice, and bade the Sage.
He thither went, and with him Raghu's sons,
Whose keen desire he spurred to see the Bow
World-famous. And at night they took their rest
Where wave the pleasant trees of Gautama,
Sainted Ascetic, whose fair spouse—deceived—
Short space to Indra yielded. For that sin
She turned to stone, nor sooner her fair form
Regained, till, after ages, holy dust
From Râma's blessed feet fell on her limbs.

120

Now, when King Janaka had heard the Saint
Was come, with Raghu's sons attending, straight
He went to meet them, showing honour due
To Virtue's self, with Wealth and Pleasure joined.
The dwellers in Videha, glad at heart,

With longing looks devoured the Princes twain,
 Like Punarvâsu come once more to earth,
 Nor dared to wink, lest haply they might miss
 One moment's joy. Now, when the Sacrifice
 And altar-rites were over, Kauçika—
 Who knew all fitting seasons—told the King
 How Râma longed to try the mighty Bow.

130

He, when he saw the lovely, high-born Boy,
 And knew the Bow, how stiff it was to bend,
 Grieved he had set his daughter's hand a prize
 For thews and sinews :—"Nay," he soon replied,
 "Great Saint, it were not meet a noble calf
 Should vainly try a task which all the strength
 Demands of full-grown forest elephants.

140

For, Sire and Saint ! thou knowest—many kings,
 Skilled archers, brawny-armed from bowstring's use,
 Have failed to draw the Bow, and wrung their hands,
 And crying—"Fie !" departed." But the Sage
 Quick answered :—"Know, O King, this Hero's might
 Transcends all words : thyself shalt see the proof
 Upon thy Bow—as shows a shattered rock
 The lightning's power." The Monarch, soon convinced
 Of Râma's might, though veiled in boyish mien—
 As Indra's beetle holds the power of flame—
 Gave order that the attendant host should bring
 The Bow renowned, as Indra thousand-eyed
 Commands the rangèd clouds to show his Bow
 Mild-beaming. Soon as Râma saw the Arm,

150



THE TRIAL OF THE BOW

Fell as great Çesha sleeping, eagerly
 He seized it : 'twas the Bow that Çiva used,
 That mighty God whose standard bears a bull, 160
 To shoot the escaping Victim as it fled.
 On Râma wondering all the assembly gazed
 With fixed eyes, and saw him string the Bow,
 Unyielding as a rock, not using more
 Of strength (it seemed) than Love puts forth to string
 His own soft bow of flowers. Nay more, that Bow,
 Drawn by the Hero's careless hand too far,
 Snapped with harsh thunderous sound, proclaiming loud
 To wrathful Bhṛigu's son the Warrior-race
 Again had raised its head. The Monarch, glad 170
 To hail such might transcendent, snapping thus
 Great Çiva's Bow, to Râma gave Sîtâ,
 His lovely daughter, not of woman born,
 Like Lakshmî born on earth. His child the King,
 Fulfilling so his promise, straight bestowed
 In presence of the Saint :—fit witness he,
 Not less than sacred Fire, to bind their vows.
 Then noble Janaka—his household Priest
 Revered—as envoy sent to Koçala,
 This message bearing :—“Grant me, noble King, 180
 That through my daughter's marriage Nimi's race
 Be made thy servants !”

Now the Father's heart
 Was set for Râma e'en on such a bride,
 When lo ! the Brâhman came, and crowned his wish :

So speedily a good man's thoughts bear fruit,
 As doth the Wishing-Tree ! The Brâhman's speech,
 With lowly words due prefaced, when he heard,
 Great Indra's friend, the Ascetic-King, set forth,—
 The Sun eclipsing with his army's dust.

Surrounding Mithîlâ, he pressed the woods

190

That girt it round, with close-investing host,—
 A friendly pressure, which the capital

Endured, as brides their bridegrooms' close embrace

Rejoice in. Those two Kings, like Varuṇa

And Indra meeting, skilled to mark fit times,

Then son with daughter wedded, in such state

As suited with their splendour. Raghu's Fame

Earth's daughter took to wife ; and Urmilâ,

Her younger sister, Bharat ; while the Twins,

Their mighty younger brethren, mated them

200

With Kuçadhvaja's slender-waisted maids.

So wedded to fair brides the Princes four,

With Râma chief, shone glorious,—as in States

Successful Kingcraft shines by peace or war,

Or bribing foes, or sowing discord dire.

Harmonious matched, King's daughters with King's sons,

Each in the other found their bliss complete,

In closest union joined, as words unite

In ordered speech. The King of Koçala,

The Princes four thus wedded, well content,

210

Three marches by the King of Mithîlâ

Escorted on his journey, homeward passed.



RĀMA'S MARRIAGE



The host swept on :—but fierce opposing winds
 Blew down the flagstaffs, made the march a toil,
 As river-torrents overflow their banks,
 And tear the fallow. Then a stormy ring,
 Portentous, clasped the Sun,—as 'twere a gem
 Borne by a snake the King of Birds had slain
 Amid the lissom coils. The expanse of heaven,
 Swept by grey vulture-wings, and hung with clouds
 Blood-dripping, awed the sight. Grim jackal-troops
 With hideous howling hied them to the west,
 To rouse (it seemed) fierce Bhṛigu's Son, long used
 To appease his father's ghost with Warrior-blood.

220

At these ill omens, this tempestuous wind,
 Awestruck, the prudent King besought his Priest
 To read the portents : soothing, he replied—
 "All will be well, my King !" Then suddenly
 A dazzling splendour rose before the host,
 Which soon with clearer sight they pierced, and saw
 A glorious Warrior-shape. The Hero bore
 His Brâhman father's cord, a mighty bow
 Proclaimed his mother born of Warrior-blood,—
 Like Sun and Moon together met he seemed,
 Or snake-girt sandal-tree. For he it was
 Who, when his Sire's fierce rage burst bounds of right,
 And bade him slay his mother, did the deed,—
 First triumphed o'er his heart, then o'er the world.
 From his right ear a string of *Aksha* seeds
 Hung down, a score and one, as numbering

230

240

The times he had destroyed the Warrior-race,
 An awful chaplet. Then the King despaired
 At sight of Bhṛigu's Son, in whom fell wrath
 (Stirred by his father's fate) worked to destroy
 The Warrior-seed ; for yet his sons were boys,
 And he defenceless. Joy and dread at once
 The name of Râma brought him, borne alike
 By his loved son and by the mighty foe,—
 So snakes and chaplets bear one common name.
 Yet, "Welcome, Saint!" he cried : the cruel foe
 Disdained his greeting, rolling baleful eyes,
 That blazed with wrath 'gainst all the Kshatriya race,
 To where young Râma stood,—and thus addressed
 The Prince advancing fearless, while his bow
 He firmly grasped, and 'twixt his fingers laid
 The arrow on the string, as hot for strife :—

250

"I hate the Warrior-brood : they wronged me first,
 And I destroyed them, winning rest ; but now
 Thy valour and renown have stirred my wrath,
 As when a sleeping snake at blow of staff
 Starts up enraged. 'Tis rumoured thou hast broke
 The Bow of Mithilâ, not bent before,
 Though oft attempted : exploit this, I deem,
 Which blunts my horn of glory. Yea, my name,
 The name of Râma, famous through the world,
 Thou also bearest, and thy thirst for fame
 Must cast reproach on me. Know then, I hate
 With equal hatred only two,—the King

260

Who stole away the sacred Calf, and thee,
 Offending equally, whose hand would snatch 270
 My honour from me : yet I bear an Axe
 That splits the stubborn rock, and my renown
 Is stablished on the smiting of thy race,—
 Which yet delights me not if thou be left
 Unconquered ; for the might of Fire is shown
 By blazing in the waves no less than when
 Dry tinder feeds it. Know that Çiva's bow,
 Which thou didst break, had lost through Vishṇu's power
 Its primal virtue : so a soft-breathed gale
 Lays low a tree which, on the river's brink, 280
 The stream has undermined. But take *my* bow
 (Be this the test !), string *it*, and draw when strung,
 The arrow firmly laid : then, only then,
 Will I confess thee Victor, and avow
 Thy prowess mates my own. But, if thou blench
 And dread my flaming Axe-edge, then submit !
 And sue for mercy, though that prayer be vain."

So spake with aspect fierce great Bhṛigu's Son :
 But Râma, while a soft smile curved his lips,
 For fitting answer stretched his hand to grasp 290
 The offered bow :—that weapon, once his own,
 Again he clasped, and laughed for joy : so clouds,
 In new-born beauty smile, but tenfold fair
 Shine when the Bow of Indra lends its hues.

Then, resting the great bow a moment's space
 Upon the ground to string it, high aloft

The mighty Hero raised it : but the foe
 Of all the Warrior-race, like dying lamp,
 Lost all his lustre. Wondering gazed the host
 Upon the twain, while one in splendour grew
 And waned the other fast, like Sun and Moon,
 When sets the Sun and rises the Full Moon.

300

With mild-eyed pity Râma saw his foe
 Bereft of strength, and saw the fatal shaft
 Which on the string he laid,—not less in might
 Than Çiva's peerless son,—and thus he spake :—

“O Brâhman-hero ! not without remorse
 Can I resolve to smite thee, though thyself
 Wast first the aggressor : choose thou then thy doom !
 Shall this my shaft destroy for thee this world,
 Or that beyond, thy pious actions' meed ?”

310

The humbled Saint replied :—“I know Thee now,
 The Soul Supreme incarnate ! wherefore, Lord,
 Shouldst Thou be angry that I longed to see
 Great Vishṇu's majesty in Thee come down
 To earth ? My chastisement by Thee, my Lord,
 Itself exalts me, though my Father's foes
 By me were burnt to ashes, and I deemed
 'Twas but a little thing to give away
 The World of land and ocean. Wherefore now,
 O Sage Divine ! I pray Thee, leave me free
 To haunt Earth's holy places : loss of Heaven
 Will scarce affect whom pleasure least attracts.”

320

And Râma answered :—“Have thy wish !” and turned,

And shot his arrow Eastward, barring so,
 Spite of his merits, for all time to come,
 To Bhṛigu's Son the path to Paradise.
 Then Râma clasped his feet, and pardon craved :
 To bear him humbly toward a conquered foe
 Fits well a Hero ! Then that Saint replied :—

330

“ My mother's sinful nature now at length
 Is cast off wholly ; peace I win from strife,
 My Sire's blest state ; yea, loss itself bears fruit
 Matured and perfect, by Thy favour, Lord !
 Now I depart :—unhindered be Thy course
 To work deliv'rance for the Blessed Gods ! ”

The Brother-princes thus the Saint addressed,
 And vanished from men's sight. Then Râma's Sire
 Embraced his Hero-son, in pride and love,
 As snatched from Death ; and now new-born delight
 Dispelled his transient fear, as cooling showers
 Soon quench a forest-fire around a tree,
 The woodland's pride. So, after certain nights
 Spent on the march in pleasant rustic bowers,
 The Monarch, far-renowned as Çiva's self,
 Reached his Ayodhyâ, where the city-dames
 Came crowding fast, and filled the lattices
 With eager eyes, to gaze on Sîtâ fair !

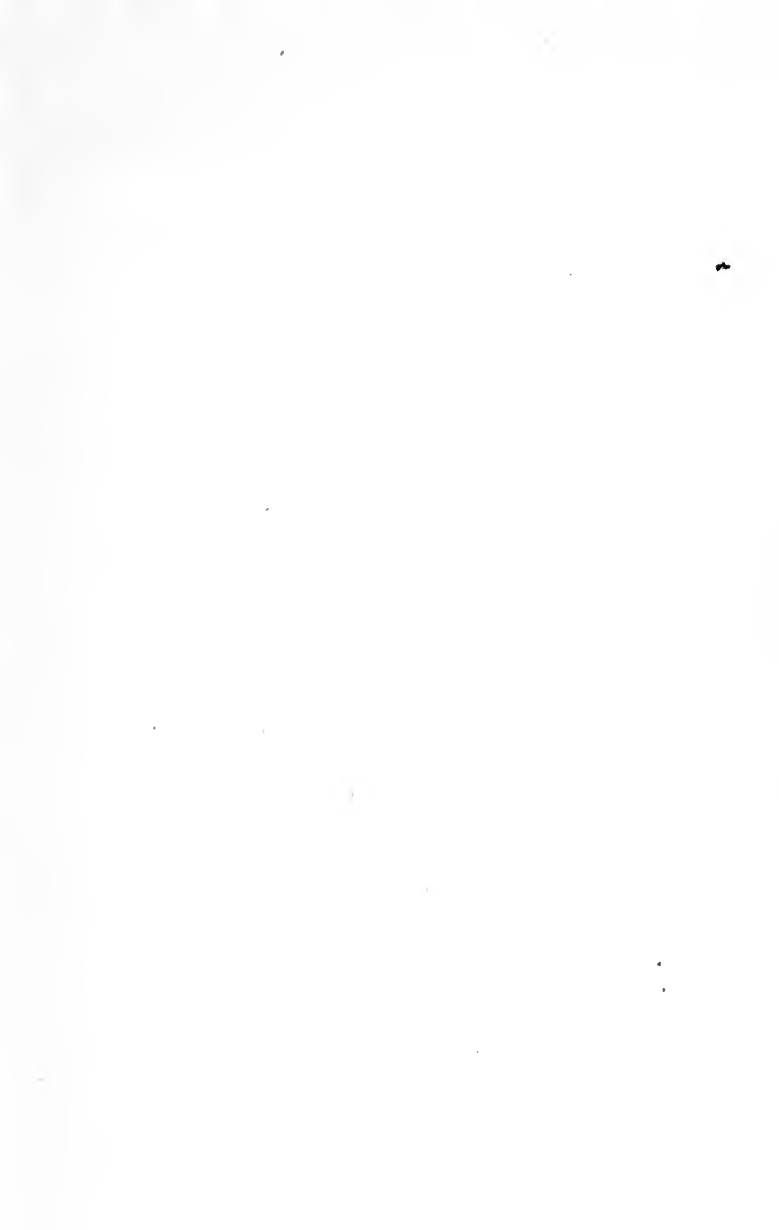
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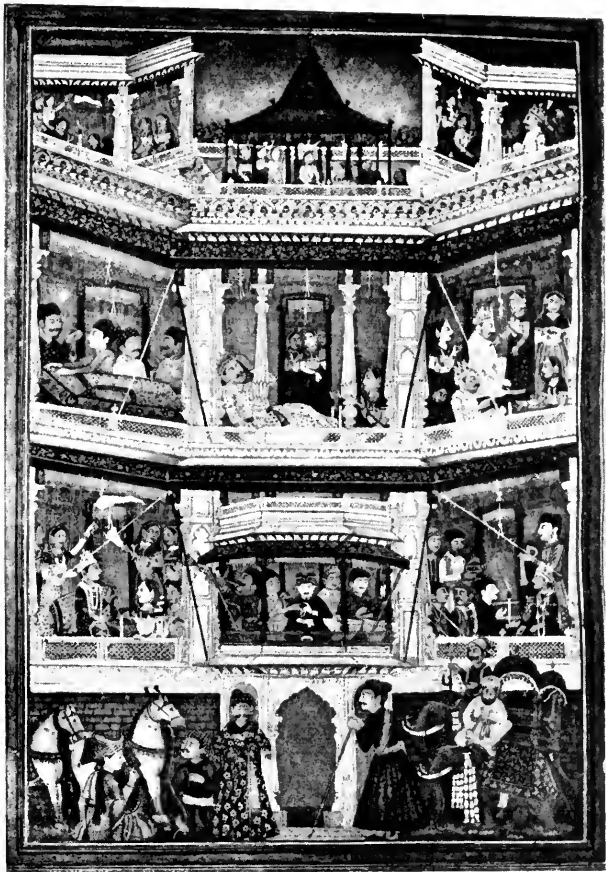
CANTO XII

*The Banishment of Râma ; the Carrying-away of Sîtâ ; her
Rescue, and Râvaṇa's Defeat and Death.*

Now Daçaratha, having known all joys
Of sense, and entering on life's final stage,
Neared his eclipse, as fades before the dawn
The lamplight. Fearing Kaikeyî, Old Age—
Squat at his ear and hidden in grey hairs—
Urged that the Kingdom be to Râma given.

Then rumour spread that Râma should be King,
The people's Darling, gave to every man
His inmost heart's desire, as springs refresh—
Spread through a garden—every tree alike. 10
But when for his Anointing all was ripe,
Kaikeyî interposed with fell resolve,
Marred all the pomp, and drew hot tears of grief
From her Lord's agèd eyes. In vain he sought
To soothe her rage,—who urged more veh'mently
Two promises erst made, as flooded plains
Drive hissing from their holes two monstrous snakes.
One promise now she used, for fourteen years





DAÇARATHA'S DISTRESS

To banish Râma,—with the next she claimed
(Though well she knew the cost, her husband's life), 20
For her own son the Royal throne. With tears,
At bidding of his Father, Râma took
The world-wide Realm, but with all cheerfulness
Received the doom of exile. Sore amazed,
The people marked his aspect all unchanged,
Both when he wore the robes of royal state,
And when the bark-dress. Lakshmaṇ and Sîtâ
He took for his companions, and possessed
Both Daṇḍaka's wide forest and the hearts
Of all who virtue loved : so he discharged 30
From stain upon his truth his Kingly Sire.
That Sire, heart-broken at his exile, knew
How by rash act of yore he earned the curse ;
And, deeming only Death could make him pure,
Forsook the throne and sought for ways to die.

Then foes, that eager watched for wasting flaws,
Pounced on the realm, whose King was now eclipsed,
And Râma banished. Agèd councillors
The people, masterless, sent to recall
Prince Bharata, then with his mother's kin, 40
And dried their tears. But when that noble Prince
Heard how his Father died, the Kingly state
Grew hateful to him,—and his mother too.
With armèd host he followed Râma's steps,
And marked with many a tear where Hermits showed
The trees 'neath which with Lakshmaṇ he had slept.

When found in Chitrakûṭa's forest, first
 He told their Father's passing ; next, he urged
 Persistent his return, to wed the Realm,
 Whose charms now withered unenjoyed. Himself 50
 He deemed a mere supplanter, gathering
 The fruits of Earth, while Râma still delayed,
 His elder brother, Fortune's hand to claim.
 But Râma yielded not ; he rather chose
 His sainted Father's doom to abide,—and gave,
 Long-urged, as pledges of his right as King,
 The Royal sandals. Then the Prince went back,
 Yet entered not the city ; but, encamped
 In Nandî, ruled the Kingdom as a trust,
 Not as his own : firm in his loyalty, 60
 Not grasping at the crown, pure Bharata
 Made expiation for his mother's crime.

But Râma with bright Sîtâ lived content
 A forest-life, sustained on forest-food,
 And—with his younger brother—while in youth
 Took up the life austere and rigid vows
 That bind in age Ikshvâku's mighty line.

Now on a day when, wearied with the chase,
 His head awhile he laid in Sîtâ's lap,
 Beneath a forest-king, whose spreading shade 70
 Was fixed by power divine, great Indra's bird,
 As 'twere in scorn of Râma's love-contests,
 Scratched with his claws her breasts. She quickly roused



BHARATA'S ARRIVAL AT CHITRAKÛTA



Her mighty Lord, who with a blade of grass
The offender smote, and blinded one rash eye.

But Râma deemed his refuge all too near,
Lest Bharat might return to urge his suit,
And left the glades on Chitrakûṭa's slopes,
Whose deer lamented when he left. He passed
Far to the South, as welcome guest received
In Hermits' huts ;—so in the Autumn months
The Sun for southern quarters quits the North.
Him following Videha's Princess shone,
Bright as the Kingdom's Genius, fain to woo
His Royal virtues, by Kaikeyi's wiles
Forbid to wed him. Perfumes strangely sweet,
From Anasûyâ's ointment on her limbs,
She shed around her, luring so the bees
From forest-blossoms. Black as cloud of night,
A Râkshasa, Virâdha named, stood up,
Opposing Râma's march, as Râhu's bulk
Obstructs the moon. Then sudden from between
The guardian Brothers he the Princess tore,
As drought licks up the rain in Autumn months.
But him the Heroes slew, Kâkutstha's sons,
And,—ere the fetid stench from his foul limbs
Could taint the world,—they quickly buried him.

Then at Agastya's bidding Râma fixed,
The bounds of right observing, his abode
In wide Panchâvatî, as Vindhya high
Stands stablished in his might. To Râma there

80

90

100

Came Râvaṇ's sister, faint with love, as seeks
 A snake oppressed with heat on Malaya
 The forest's grateful shade. Her shameless love
 The crook-clawed Demon told, nor shamed to tell
 In Sîtâ's very presence : true it is,
 That woman's high-strung love respects no bounds.
 She told her lineage too :—but he replied,—
 “Ah, Maiden, I am wedded ! seek the love
 Of my young brother !”—so the love-sick maid
 Bull-shouldered Râma counselled. She forsooth
 Had sought out Lakshmaṇ first, and so returned
 Again to Râma, as alternately
 A stream sweeps either bank. Her Sîtâ's laugh
 From momentary softness roused to rage,
 As Ocean's waves that sleep 'neath windless skies
 Are swollen by the Moon. “Beware !” she cried,
 “This scorn thou 'lt dearly rue ! Thou, timid roe,
 Hast dared a tiger's fury ! Look, and fear !”
 So spake the Demon threatening : Sîtâ shrank
 Against her husband's breast, dismayed to see
 The foe resume her hideous shape, and spread
 Her murderous claws. Heroic Lakshmaṇ too,
 Who heard a gentle, dove-like cooing first,
 Then wolfish howlings, knew her for transformed,—
 He drew his sword, swift burst into the hut,
 And hacked with blow on blow that awful shape.

She flying upward shook a threatening hand,
 With fingers crooked, thick as knotted reeds,

110

120

Then flew to Janasthân, and told her wrongs 130
To Khara and his peers,—new insult heaped
By Râma on the Demon-host. In wrath
They made her wrongs their own, whose lips and mouth
Were scored and scarred, and courted foul defeat,
Attacking Râma. On they boldly came,
With arms uplifted, whom when Râma saw,—
His hope of victory laying on his bow,—
His Spouse he left to Lakshman's guard. The foes
Were full a thousand, Râma only one,—
Yet in the fight each several Demon found 140
A foe to meet him. Dûshana he smote,
Sent as their champion, as pure-living men
Smite fleshly lusts :—him first, and Khara next,
And Triçiras : so swift he slew the three,
They seemed to fall together. His bright darts
Pierced through them, and—unstained—drank their foul
lives,

The birds their blood. Soon of that Demon-host,
By Râma's arrows quelled, save headless trunks
Nought on the plain stood up ; beneath the rain
He showered on them all that dread array 150
Lay lapt in endless slumber, while foul wings
Of filthy vultures hovered o'er their heads.

Alone escaping, Sûrpanakhâ bore
The news of foul defeat at Râma's hands
To mighty Râvaṇ, sore dismayed, who deemed
That by his sister's maiming, then defeat

And slaughter of his kinsmen, his ten heads
Lay trampled in the dust by Râma's heel.

By magic art a Demon at his word
Took form of deer, and Raghu's sons deceived
By futile chase, and—though a while delayed
By staunch Jatâyû—Sîtâ bore away.

160

The brothers seeking her the Vulture found
With mangled pinions, who with failing breath
Love's final debt to Daçaratha paid.

In faltering words he told how Râvaṇ fell
The Princess tore away : his wounds declared
His brave resistance : then he died. The twain,
Who late had mourned a Father's loss, renewed
For him as for a parent funeral rites,

170

And reared a lofty pyre. Bold Râma then,
Kabandha's counsel following, who by death
Escaped from lifelong curse, made treaty firm
And strong alliance with the Monkey-King,
Sugrîva, mourning like himself a bride

Late torn away. The Hero quick discrowned
Usurping Bâli, and his friend restored—
Sugrîva—to his throne, as fitter word
Displaces one less fit. The Monkey-hosts

At Râma's bidding sped to every clime,
And like his own sad thoughts searched through the world.

180

Sampâtî meeting, Hanumân at length,
The Wind-god's son, had news where Sîtâ dwelt,
And crossed the Ocean,—as a happy soul

The stream of Death. Last, searching Lankâ through,
He found the fair Princess, but compassed round
By Demon-guards,—a fair mimosa clasped
By poisonous creepers. Râma's token first,
The ring, he gave, which she with joyful tears
Bedewed,—then with her husband's love-words cheered. 190
Stout Aksha next he slew, and—high of heart—
Set Lankâ all in flames, then for brief space
Sustained unequal fight. His work so done,
He hied him back to Râma, and the ring—
His Sîtâ's token—showed, as 'twere the heart
She fain had sent. As Râma touched the gem,
He closed his eyes in rapture, and in thought
Felt her heart beating on his own : so keen
His longing was to meet his prisoned Love,
That Ocean circling Lankâ round appeared 200
A narrow moat, no more. At once he marched,
The Demon-foes to quell,—while Monkey-hosts
Behind him swarmed, careering through the air
Not less than on the earth. On Ocean's shore
He fixed his camp ; to whom Vibhîshaṇ came,
His brother's side deserting, sage advice
In love to Râma offering,—wise in time.
To him did Râma give the Demon-realm
In recompense : so ever counsel sage
And timely bears rich fruit. Across the sea 210
The Hero laid a bridge, resembling much
That mighty Serpent which for Vishṇu's sleep

Above the waters rises. So he crossed,
 And Lankâ close besieged with tawny Apes,
 That like a doubled golden rampart showed.

Then Demons joined in deadly strife with Apes,
 And Heaven resounded with their battle-cries,—
 For Râvaṇ or for Râma. Steel-bound clubs
 By trees were shattered, maces split on rocks,
 And claws gave wounds more terrible than steel, 220
 While elephants dashed rocks in splinters small.
 Fair Sîtâ watched the fight: and swooned at sight
 Of Râma's head struck off, but soon revived
 When good Trijâta told that Râma lived,
 And 'twas but glamour. At this healing word,
 Her sorrow turned to joy; yet loving shame
 Still ruled her as she thought,—“I yet could live,
 While thinking *He* was dead!” Now in the fight
 Bold Meghanâda's noose one moment bound
 The mighty Brethren, whom the Bird of Heaven 230
 Loosed, swooping down; so soon that peril passed,
 It seemed a dream, no more. The Demon-King
 Pierced Lakshmaṇ's breast with deadly spear,—whereat
 The heart of Râma, though himself unharmed,
 Was cleft in twain by sorrow. Healing herbs
 The Monkey-monarch brought, and salved the wound,—
 And Lakshmaṇ swift reviving with keen shafts
 Again taught Lankâ's wives to weep. No more
 He suffered Meghanâda's shout, but snapped
 His bow that rivalled Indra's,—Autumn so 240

Dissolves a cloud. Stout Kumbhakarna next,
 By Hanumân to woeful straits reduced,
 Like his fell sister, Râma's self assailed,—
 Wide-gaping like a rocky cave. Him soon
 The Hero's arrows sent to sleep in death :
 And Râma mused,—“Much lovedst thou sleep, my foe !
 And wert untimely roused in evil hour.”

The Brethren many a famous Râkshas more
 Smote with their arrows till the battle-dust
 Was smothered with their blood in copious streams. 250
 At length came Râvaṇ forth again to fight,
 His palace leaving, well resolved that now
 The Worlds that day should either Râma lose
 Or Râvaṇ. On he drove his fenced car
 To where the Hero stood,—till Indra sent
 His chariot and bay steeds to Râma's help.
 That car auspicious, leaning on the arm
 Of Mâthali, He mounted,—while its flag
 Waved in the breeze, cool from the waters pure
 Of Heaven's own river. Indra's mail he donned, 260
 Helped by the charioteer,—that mail from which
 Repelled the Daityas' arrows fell to earth,
 Soft as frail lotus-stems. Fierce battle raged
 Between the mighty foes, who found at last,
 So meeting, scope to show their matchless might.

Fell Râvaṇ fought alone, his hosts withdrawn,
 But by his many necks, and heads, and arms,
 Appeared encircled by his mother's kin.

The Demon-foe, whose might prevailed of yore
Against the world's great Guardians, who had won 270
His boon from Brahmâ—offering up his heads,
Who poised aloft Kailâsa, Râma held
A worthy foeman. Râvaṇ, fiercely wroth,
Drove deep his arrow in that strong right arm,
Which, wildly-throbbing, told he should redeem
His fair Princess. Then Râma loosed a shaft
Which, piercing Râvaṇ's breast, lodged in the ground,
Glad tidings bearing to the Serpent-world.

The fight grew stern ; each hero matched his foe,
With sword for sword, and taunt for taunt, as when 280
Two rival speakers strive for mastery.
Swayed by their equal valour Victory
Long wavered, as a rampart set between
Two raging elephants. The showers of shafts
That either poured on other stayed the fall
Of flowers rained down by Gods and Demons, keen
To mark the rapid interchange of blows.

Then Râvaṇ dashed an iron-studded mace,
Fell as the club of Death, of silkwood formed,
Full at his foe. But Râma with keen shafts, 290
Curved-headed, cut the mace in twain or e'er
It reached the chariot,—like a slender twig,—
Thus shattering the Demons' soaring hopes.
Then did the matchless archer to his string
Lay that unerring arrow, Brahmâ named,
A simple meet to heal the stinging pain

That gnawed his Sîtâ's heart. With flaming points,
 Split in a hundred parts, resembling most
 The Serpent-King's huge frame, when baleful gleams
 His awful hood, it hurtled through the air.

300

Then in a moment, winged with spells, the shaft
 Smote off,—the wound unfelt,—the whole ten heads
 Of Râvaṇ. But the line of headless necks
 Shone, as the body fell, with fitful gleams,
 Like morning sunbeams sparkling on a lake,
 By wavelets broken. Even then the Gods,
 Though all the heads had fallen, scarce rejoiced
 With full rejoicing ; for they feared those heads
 (As erst befell) might join the trunk once more.

Then fell on Râma's head, which soon should wear
 The Kingly crown, a rain of fragrant flowers,
 Poured by the joyful Gods,—while on them swarmed
 (Their wings with honey laden) bees that late
 Forsook the perfumed streams which from the brows
 Distilled of Elephants that guard the Worlds.

310

Now Râma soon unbent his mighty Bow,
 The Gods' high mandate well fulfilled ; and now
 The Charioteer of Indra bade farewell,
 And drove to Heaven his car with thousand bays,
 While waved aloft the flags which Râvaṇ's shafts
 Pierced through and through. The Lord of Raghu's
 line

320

Took back his well-loved Bride from purging fires,
 And to his loyal friend Vibhîshaṇ gave

The crown he tore from Râvaṇ. Then by him
Followed, by Lakshmaṇ, and by Hanumân,—
King o'er the Monkey-host,—the radiant Car
Won by his valour from proud Râvaṇa
He mounted joyfully, and homeward sped.

CANTO XIII

Râma's Triumphant Return with Sîtâ

INCARNATE now in Râma, Vishṇu's self,
 High Judge of virtue, crossed in Heavenly Car
 His sound-pervaded realm,—and, as He gazed
 On Ocean rich in pearls, his Spouse addressed
 In love's soft tones :—"See, Fairest! how my bridge
 Yon foamy mass now spans, as Autumn's skies
 Unruffled, bright with stars, the Milky Way
 Divides in twain. This sea, old stories tell,
 Of yore my Sires made flow, when in their quest
 They tore up Earth to reach the Victim-horse
 By Bâli to Pâtâla led, to stop
 Their father's sacrifice. The sunbeams hence
 Derive engendering virtue, riches swell,
 And viewless fire is bred, and moonlight mild.
 Like Vishṇu's self almighty, multiform,
 Unmeasured, subtle, all ten spheres it clasps,
 Transcendent in its worth as in its power.

10

"The Soul Supreme, by Brahmâ's praise extolled
 (From whom the Lotus springs whereon he sleeps),

Upon its breast reclines, when ends the Age 20
Of working, when—absorbing all that is—
He sinks again to rest. To Ocean's arms
The mountain-hosts dismayed in hundreds fled,
Shorn of their pride when Indra clipped their wings,
As to a King revered when whelmed by foes
The neighbouring monarchs flee. Its waters clear
Swelled at the Deluge, and one moment's space
Earth's cheeks made lovely, till the Mighty God
Upheaved her from Pâtâla. All his wives,
Impartial in his love, he greets alike, 30
With wavy lips receiving kisses sweet
From eager river-mouths. Those monsters see!
With yawning mouths they drink the fishy flood,
Close with a snap their mighty jaws, and spout
Great streams of water through their fissured skulls.
Sudden leap up the monster crocodiles,
And cleave the foam, while on their cheeks the spray
Like sparkling eardrops clings. Here piled-up shells,
Which rushing waters tear from coral-sprays
That mock thy ruby lips, hang on the points 40
Of slender branchlets, till at length they fall—
Their strength exhausted. Wide-backed Ocean now,
Grazed by the waterspout that stooped to drink
Till by fierce storm-wind driven, milk-white gleams,
As when of yore with mighty Mandara churned
By hosts Divine. Along the salt deep's shore,
That stretches slender like a copper rim,

Wave dark *Tamâlas* mixed with forest-palms,
Like streak of rust on polished metal's gleam.

“Bride with dark almond-eyes ! the landward breeze 50
With *Ketak*-pollen dusts thy cheek,—a care
By me omitted, while I pine to taste
Thy ruby lips. Our swiftly-rolling car
Now in a moment brings us to that shore,
Where from cleft shells lie pure pearls richly heaped,
Where betel-trees fruit-laden sweep the sands.
Look down, O Queen, whose roe-like eyes delight
And form of ample curves, and mark our way !
As Ocean vanishes see how boon Earth,
Clothed with green woods, seems sinking as we gaze ! 60
Obedient to my will this Car Divine
Cleaves now the sphere of Gods, anon of clouds,
Now skims the path of birds. A breeze from Heaven,—
Sweet-laden by Airâvat's fragrant brows,
Cooled by the spray from triple Gangâ's flood,
Wipes from thy brows those drops that morning's heat
Had raised. The cloud, by lightnings braceleted,
Touched by thy curious hand through lattice stretched,
My hasty Queen ! with double gold is decked.
These bark-clad Eremites, who deem that now 70
This Daṇḍaka is free from hindrances
To Saintly works, well-pleased rebuild their homes,
Too long forsaken. In this very glade
I vainly sought thee, found an anklet dropped,
Struck dumb with sorrow, riven from thy foot,

That mocks the lotus' hue. Ah, timid Fair !
 These creepers, dumb yet pitying, bent their arms
 To show the path by which the Râkshasa
 Had borne thee,—bending low the tender tips
 Of all their boughs. Their fragrant food the roes
 Neglecting, gazed with moveless brows full south,
 And taught my ignorance the way thou 'dst gone.

80

“There in our front soars Malaya to Heaven,
 Whereon the clouds dropped rain, and I salt tears
 For loss of thee. There, reft of thee, the scents
 Which lakes, fresh-filled by clouds, exhaled I loathed ;
Kadamba flowers, half-opened, pleased me not,
 Nor peacocks' low, sweet tones ; the thundering clouds,
 From caves resounding, harshly struck my ear,
 Who thought on thee, my timorous Love ! who erst
 Didst sportive hide thee, teasing. There thine eyes,
 Beauteous, yet clouded by the smoke that rose
 From marriage-fires, tormented,—while half-oped
 Bright fungus-growths (earth yet in cloud-mist veiled)
 Were vainly emulous. Scarce can the sight,
 Far-darting downwards, Pampâ's lake descry,
 With storks at play, shut in 'mid circling brakes
 Of mighty reeds. There, Love ! I fondly gazed
 On happy *Chakravâkas*, in their love
 United still, in gracious ministry
 Each giving to his mate fresh lotus-blooms,
 While I was reft of thee ! When all in tears
 By river-bank a lithe *Açoka*-trunk,

90

100

Bent by its swelling clusters like fair breasts,
 I vainly clasped, and thought I held thee, Queen !
 Lakshman forbade me. O'er Godâvari's waves
 Now soar the cranes, scared by the golden bells
 That tinkle round our Car, so welcoming thee
 With all their white array. This sacred grove,
 Where thou didst nurse the mango, tender-framed, 110
 With daily watering,—where the deer look up
 Expectant of thee,—now once more I see
 More gladly for long absence. I recall
 How on a day, worn out by toil of chase
 By this Godâvari's streams, while spray-cooled winds
 Dried off my face the sweat, my weary head
 I rested on thy breast in reed-built hut.
 Here while on earth that famous Saint had dwelt,
 Who cleared the streams of mud, whose wrinkling brow
 Hurl'd Nahusha of old from Indra's realm. 120

“Free from all lust, here takes my soul delight
 To sniff the scented smoke from altar-fires
 Well-fed, that triple rise full in our path,
 And lightly meet the Car,—by spotless Saint
 Enkindled. Here, high Lady ! gleams the lake
 Of Çâtakarṇi's pleasures,—‘Five Nymphs’ named,
 Embowered in distant woods, a second moon
 Half-seen amid the clouds. Of old, men tell,
 Amid the deer he lived, and *Darbha* grass
 Alone he ate, till Indra, much dismayed 130
 At such strict penance, bound him in the toils

Of five celestial Nymphs. The cymbal's clang
 Harmonious and the music of the voice,
 Still rising from his palace closely-hid,
 Wake momentary echoes from the hood
 That shades our Car.

“ Here mild Sutīkshṇa dwells,
 High merit storing up, 'mid four fierce fires,
 The blazing Sun a fifth. Him Indra sought,
 Anxious, to tempt through wanton Nymphs' bright eyes,
 With laughter beaming, and coquettish wiles
 That half-revealed their zones,—but vainly sought.
 With arms uplifted now he waves the right,
 With holy beads encircled, graciously
 Requiting courtesy,—that arm wherewith
 He strokes the hinds and gathers sacred grass.
 Vowed to strict silence, only with his head
 Bowed slightly he returns my courteous words,
 And—now the Car is past—his constant gaze
 Again has sought the Sun. Yon penance-grove
 Afforded Çarabhanga's rites austere
 Pure shade, who long the fire with fuel fed,
 And last his body gave, by Holy Texts
 From sin redeemed. The welcome of his guests
 His worthy sons, those trees, give now, whose shade
 Dispels long journeying's toil, whose luscious fruit
 Weighs down their branches. Chitrakûṭa's peak,
 O lithe-limbed Lady! now enchants the eye ;—
 Like stately bull he stands, his mouth a cave,

140

150

With cascade-roar loud-bellowing, highest peaks
 Cloud-capped like horns lime-whitened from a wall. 160
 Low at his base, with rapids smooth, shines out—
 By distance thread-like made,—Mandâkinî,
 A pearly band on Earth's sweet neck! 'Twas here
 That from a tall *Tamâla* fragrant blooms,
 Hard by the mountain-side, I plucked, and twined
 Bright earrings for thy cheeks, as barley pale.

"Here in the wood doth pious Atri keep
 His vows austere; with herds of beasts 'tis filled
 That fear no harm,—nor need his trees to flower
 Before they fruit. Here Anasûyâ brought 170
 The threefold Gangâ, Çiva's crown, to earth,
 That Holy men, in merit rich, might bathe
 Where erst the mighty Seven golden blooms
 Of lotus gathered. Hermits' very trees,
 While they within their huts are plunged in thought,
 Amid the altar-precincts motionless,
 Their leaves unstirred by wind, themselves seemed
 wrapped

In pious contemplation. Here, my Love!
 Behold the dark-leaved fig-tree thou didst choose,
 Which, bowed with fruit, glows like an emerald-heap 180
 With rubies interspersed. A necklet here
 Thou seest of pearls, 'midst which the emerald gleams,
 There a pure lily-crown, where sapphire-like
 The lotus glows: that string of birds behold,
 That love the Mânas-lake, where swans appear,

White-winged : there on the Earth a yellow band
Of sandalwoods, picked out with aloes dark.

“See here the Moon’s bright orb with sable shade
Streaked sharply,—therethrough rifted autumn-clouds
Resplendent shows Heaven’s blue. Here, might one

say,

190

Is Çiva’s body dark, with black snake girt,
And smeared with ashes : there see, peerless Queen !
Where Gangâ rolls her flood, by Jamnâ cleft.

Those souls, men say, that cast the mortal coil,
Washed in the confluent waters of these twain,

Unknowing even of the Soul Supreme,
No more are sent to earth. Nishâda dwells

In yon fair city : there, when I refused

The crown and bound my locks up Hermit-wise,
Sumantra mourning cried :—‘ Ah, Kaikeyî !

200

Thy wish is now fulfilled !’ Sarâyû here,

Whose source the wise have traced to Brahmâ’s lake,

Where golden lilies charm fair Yakshîs’ hearts,
Rolls mighty : so flows Mind from Soul Supreme.

Its banks well lined with sacrificial stones,

Past proud Ayodhyâ sweeps its flood,—where bathe,

After Horse-Sacrifice, Ikshvâku’s sons,

And sanctify its waves. It fills my soul

With reverence, common Mother of the Kings

Of Northern Koçala, who find delight

210

In her sand-islets and abundant stream.

“ Sarâyû now, my noble Father lost,

Indeed my Mother seems, and clasps me round—
 Though distant yet—with wavy arms that stir
 A cooling breeze. As dusky twilight grey,
 Before us dust-clouds rise : I augur thence
 That Bharata from Hanumân has heard
 News of my coming, and with all his hosts
 Prepares to welcome me. My Father's realm,
 That Father's vow to keep, I left ; but now,
 My penance o'er, that virtuous Prince restores
 The Royal State unblemished : rescued so,
 Thee Lakshman gave, won back by slaughter grim
 Of Khara and his peers. To meet me now
 On foot comes Bharata, our household Priest
 Placed in the van, his army's serried ranks
 Close following : he in Hermit-dress comes forth,
 And old-time councillors bear gifts in hand.
 From love to me the Prince, in flush of youth,
 Wed not fair Lakshmî, whom his Sire bequeathed,
 Who sought herself his arms : yea, all these years
 Abiding with her, yet he tasted not
 Pure wedlock's joy !”

220

230

As Râma spake, the Car,—
 That knew by sense divine his unspoke will,—
 Swift glided from the sky, by wondering eyes
 Of Bharat's hosts observed. Then, on the hand—
 Apt for all service—of the Monkey-King
 One moment leaning, Râma lighted down,—
 On well-wrought ladder stepping, crystal-runged,

Held by Vibhîṣaṇ. First the reverend Sage, 240
 Priest of Ikshvâku's line, he greeted well,
 Then took the gifts, and—bathed in tears—embraced
 His brother Bharat, kissing that leal head,
 Which, reigning in his stead, refused the Crown.

Courteous he welcomed old-time ministers,
 With beards untrimmed, and hair like Peepal-roots
 Close-matted ; they with tuneful voices asked
 Respectful of his welfare. Spake the King :—
 “ Behold my friend, of Riksha's Monkey-hosts
 Great Chief, my stay in trouble : next the stout 250
 Vibhîṣaṇ know ! ” Then Bharat hailed the twain,

By Râma praised, ere Lakshmaṇ he embraced,
 Sumitrâ's son, upraising his bent head,
 And to his bosom clasping,—close, more close,
 He well-nigh bruised his breast on cruel scars
 Which Indrajit had left. At Râma's word
 At once the Monkey-chiefs took human shapes,
 And mounted elephants, whose mighty brows
 Streamed ichor sweet, rejoicing as to climb
 Great mountains. At his word the Râkshas-King, 260

With all his hosts ascended cars unmatched
 In splendour by their own, by magic art
 Fair-fashioned. Then the Chief of Raghu's line
 Once more sat in his car, and with him sat
 His Brothers, and the banner at his will
 Moved or was steady,—as the stars' high Lord,
 The Moon, shines glorious climbing up a bank

Of dusky clouds at evening, lightning-streaked,
With Jupiter attending and his Sire.

Then Bharat praised the beauteous Maithilî,
From Râvaṇ's grasp by Râma's might set free,
As from dark flood the Lord of worlds saved Earth,
Or when the rains are over clears the moon
From cloudy masses. So her dazzling feet,
Who faithful kept her vow and dashed the hopes
Presumptuous Râvaṇ nursed, set on the head
Of him whose matted locks proclaimed the faith
He kept unswerving to his elder's claim :—
Each to the other greater lustre lent.

270

Then glorious Râma half a kos advanced,
Escorted by his folk, while Pushpaka,—
His Car Celestial,—checked its magic speed ;
Then in the pleasure-forest dwelt well-pleased,
That round Ayodhyâ stretched, where Çatrughna
With careful foresight had prepared the Camp.

280

CANTO XIV

*The Restoration of Râma to his Kingdom,
and the Divorce of Sîtâ.*

THEN did the Princely Brothers seek the homes
Where dwelt their mothers, sorrow-stricken Queens,
Of husband late bereaved,—like clinging-plants
Forlorn and left of strong protecting trunk.

The Heroes twain, resplendent in their might,
Bent low before the Queens, whose happy eyes
(By tears half-blinded) scarce discerned their forms,
Though each was blessed, as in her mother's arms
She clasped her son. But in the Heroes' eyes
The soothing tear of joy cut sorrow short,
As Jamnâ's torrent rushing from the rocks
Cleaves Gangâ's heated wave. Condolingly
They touched the scarce-healed scars the Demon's wounds
Left on their bodies : nay, the much-prized name,
"Mother of heroes," brought them little joy
Who felt its pains. Then Sîtâ, bending low,
Her Husband's mother greeted, nor transgressed
The line of awful duty, while she said :—

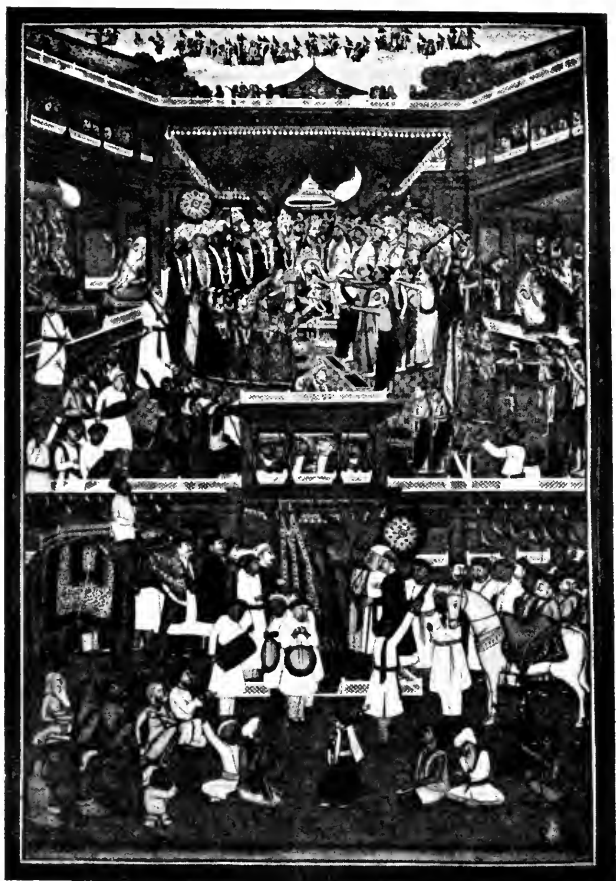
“Lo, here is Sitâ, fatal to her Lord,
Not worthy your regard!” “Dear Daughter, rise!” 20
(So said they) “’Twas thy spotless life alone
That brought thy Lord and Lakshman through their toils
Triumphant.” Then with loving words and true
They praised her, worthy Wife of worthy Lord.

Thus with their joyful tears the widowed Queens
Began the sacring,—which with hallowed stream,
From many a sainted river, poured from jars
Of gold unmixed, the Kingdom’s Senators
Completed,—of pure Raghu’s Hero-son.
From seas and streams and lakes the loyal Chiefs 30
Of Demons and of Monkeys brought great store
Of water, pouring it on Râma’s head,
As rain in torrents falls on Vindhya’s peaks
From Autumn-clouds. The splendid robes of state
To Him fresh lustre gave, whose lovely limbs
The ascetic’s dress scarce veiled, nor feared reproach
Of over-gorgeousness. Then with his hosts,
His sage advisers, loyal Demons, Apes,
He to his Father’s home passed : arches spanned
The roads, and rice from lattices was poured 40
In welcoming showers. High in his Car of State
The Hero sat, while Lakshman gently waved
The royal fan, and Bharat screened his head,
Like Kingship’s triple powers to Earth come down
Rose from the palaces wind-cloven smoke,
As ’twere the long-bereavèd City’s hair,

Its braids unloosing at the King's return.
 Next Sîtâ, Râma's Queen, in litter borne,—
 Dressed by her husband's kin in glorious robes,—
 Ayodhyâ's matrons hailed, with claspèd hands 50
 From palace-windows gazing. She the rare,
 Exhaustless unguent, Anasûyâ's gift,
 Had deftly used ; a halo round her shone ;
 And doubly pure she beamed, shòwn by her Lord
 From cleansing fires come forth. That King himself,
 Deep mine of friendship, to his friends assigned
 Well-ordered dwellings ; then with tears went in
 To that reverèd home, where dwelt his Sire,
 His image only left. With claspèd hands,
 And loving words, he soothed Kaikeyî's shame, 60
 And hailed her "Mother !" "Well," he said, "thou didst :
 To thee we owe it that our Sire held firm,
 Nor swerved from truth, and by that truth won Heaven !"

Sugrîva, and Vibhîshan, and the rest,
 With splendid courtesies he entertained,
 That, though to have they needed but to wish,
 Their minds sank overpowered. To Saints Divine,
 Come down from Heaven to do him reverence,
 He paid due honour : they His might extolled,
 And told in sacred numbers all the tale 70
 Of His high birth, His acts, and foe subdued.

So like a dream the days uncounted flew,
 Till half a month was spent :—the Saints were gone ;
 Then, richly guerdoned by the Queen's own hand,



THE ENTHRONEMENT OF RÂMA

The Kings of Apes and Demons home returned.
 And Pushpaka, that Flower of Heaven, the Car
 A thought could swift recall, which with his life
 He wrested from His mighty foe,—no more
 Required, back to Kailâsa's Lord He sent.

Then Râma sat at last upon his throne,
 Who first obeyed his Father's word, and spent
 Long years in banishment ;—and now maintained
 'Midst Virtue, Wealth, and Love unswerving course,
 And ruled his Brothers with an equal love.
 In equal honour too, as duty claimed,
 The Queens,—his own dear mother and the rest,—
 He held, as He who leads the hosts of Heaven
 His Foster-mothers six loves equally.

80

A happy world he ruled, that generous King,
 Whose arm prevailing curbed ignoble fears :
 As father he corrected, like a son
 He smoothed all griefs away. The people's weal,
 Unwearied, first he sought, and love's delight
 At fitting season he with Sîtâ took :—
 So fair the Queen, it seemed that Lakshmî's self
 Had ta'en her form to know pure marriage-bliss.
 And as they tasted all the joys of love
 Whene'er they would in gorgeous palaces,
 The memory of hardship past, endured
 In Daṇḍaka's dark shades, enhanced delight.

90

100

Then Sîtâ, softly smiling, now with face

Pale as the yellow reed, all silently
 Put forth the signs of fruitfulness, and gave
 Her Lord new happiness. He longingly
 Pressed to his heart her slender form, and marked
 How her ripe breasts assumed a deeper tinge,
 And joyfully in whispers craved to know
 If aught she longed for. Blushingly she owned
 Her strong desire to seek the Hermits' huts
 On pure Godâvari's banks, where *Kuça* grass
 Luxuriant waves, and roaming cattle crop
 Unchecked the growing rice, where Saintly maids
 Bound in close friendship dwell. The noble King
 Consented to her prayer. Then with a squire
 He sought the palace-roof, which soared to heaven,
 To feast his eyes on fair Ayodhyâ's streets.

110

He marked the thronged highway, the busy mart,
 Sarâyû ploughed by keels, and where the parks,—
 Gay with rejoicing crowds,—spread round the walls,
 Enraptured at the sight, Then, stainless King,
 Most noble Conqueror, most eloquent,
 Whose mighty frame vied with the Serpent-King's,
 He asked his faithful squire the general mind
 And sentence on his life. Reluctantly,
 At length that squire made answer :—"O my Lord !
 All that thou doest all thy people praise,
 Save this one thing,—that thou receivedst back
 Thy Queen from Râvaṇ's palace, where she dwelt."
 That slanderous word, imputing foul disgrace

120

To Sîtâ, smote his heart with crushing force,
As falls the smashing weight of iron sledge
On anvil tough. Then doubtfully he mused,—
“Shall I despise this slanderous talk? or yield,
My blameless Spouse divorcing?” Unresolved
He wavered long, his mind in helpless gloom
Swayed like a swing. Deep pondering he resolved
To end the slander in the only way,
Dismissing his pure Queen : exalted souls
Prize Fame above their lives,—far, far beyond
All earthly pleasures. So, his joy eclipsed,
He called his Brethren : they with sorrow marked
The gloom that marred his features, as He told
The stain upon his honour, ending thus :—

“Behold how dark a blot my act has brought
On all the Sun-descended race, so pure,
So flawless in its virtue,—stock of Kings
And famous Saints,—till now by me ’tis soiled,
As zephyrs moist bedim the polished steel.
Such slander spreading wide among my folk,
As spreads a drop of oil o’er troubled waves,
I could not bear,—so hates the elephant
The post and chain that bind him. Therefore I,
Though seeming careless of the seed she bears
Now in her fertile womb, must put away
My well-loved Queen,—as at my Father’s word
I sternly put from me sea-girdled Earth.

“The Queen I know is stainless, yet I dread
My people’s blaming :—Earth’s dark shadow cast

130

140

150

Across the spotless Moon, by vulgar minds
 Is held to stain her. So my glorious deeds, 160
 In slaying Giant Râvaṇ, would be vain :
 Not only so, my triumph would itself
 Let loose fresh springs of hate : not unprovoked
 A deadly snake bites at the heel that strikes.
 My purpose then is fixed, nor can be swayed
 By aught your pitying hearts might urge,—my life
 Would wither soon, exposed to slanderous tongues ! ”

When thus the King declared his stern resolve
 Against fair Sîtâ,—silence held them bound,
 Who durst not hinder, nor could praise his will. 170
 Then called he Lakshmaṇ, famous through the
 worlds,

To all his will obedient, telling him
 In secret conference, wise and eloquent,
 His weighty purpose, saying :—“ Brother dear,
 My Spouse, my Sîtâ, coyly has made known
 Her strong desire to seek the penance-groves :
 Now therefore, this pretending, drive with her
 In thy swift chariot to Vâlmiki’s home,
 And leave her there ! ” Devoted Lakshmaṇ knew
 That at his Sire’s command dread Bhṛigu’s son 180
 Had slain his mother : Râma’s high behests
 Unquestioning, though reluctant, he received :
 A Monarch’s mandates must be aye obeyed.

Fair Sîtâ, much rejoiced to have her wish,
 He lifted to the car, by staunch steeds drawn,

And driven by Sumantra. Sîtâ praised
The pleasing prospects by the way, and thought
Within her loving heart, "My dearest Lord
Does all to please me!" Knowing not the truth,—
Her Tree of Life to deadly Upas turned.

190

Yet as she journeyed, though kind Lakshman hid
The heavy grief appointed,—banishment
For ever from her husband's face, a chill
Ran through her as she felt her right eye throb,—
Dread omen of ill fate, In fear and doubt,
At once her lotus-face grew deadly pale,
And to herself she murmured loving prayers
Both for her Lord and for his Brethren three.

But when, fulfilling his high King's command,
He thought to leave chaste Sîtâ, Gangâ's self—
The Holy River—raised protesting waves,
And stayed his course. Yet faithful to his vow,
He checked the car, then helped the Queen to alight,
And in a shallop crossed the mighty stream :
No barrier stops a trusty envoy's way !
Then scarce his voice controlling for the sobs
That choked his utterance, Lakshman—like a cloud
That looses from its womb a rain of stones,
Portentous,—told her Râma's fatal will.

200

With sudden terror smitten, Sîtâ fell
To Earth, her own dear Mother,—fell, as falls
A creeper torn by rushing blast of wind
From its supporting trunk, and shed her gauds

210

Like withered blossoms. But boon Earth denied
 Her Daughter refuge, nor believed it true,—
 That, save for some dark stain, her Hero-lord,
 The Glory of his race, had put away
 His darling Queen. She for a moment's space
 Swooned, and forgot her woes ; but sense returned,
 And with it gnawing grief, when Lakshman's care
 To life recalled her, bitterer far than death.

220

Yet no reproachful word that noble Queen
 Breathed 'gainst her Lord, who so unjustly drove
 Her sinless from him : all the guilt she laid
 Upon herself, fforedoomed to endless grief
 For sins of former lives. With tender words
 Consoling her, pure Wife, great Lakshman led
 To where Vālmīki dwelt ; then humbly sued
 For pardon, pleading,—“O my Queen ! forgive
 The wrong I do thee. 'Tis thy Lord's command,
 I but his minister !” She raised him up,
 With gracious answer :—“ Brother, Sîtâ's heart
 Is glad that so thou servest her dear Lord,
 As Vishṇu's self served Indra, elder-born,
 Unquestioning : live many happy years !
 Greet well the Queens from me, and say to them,
 Each in her order,—Sîtâ bids you pray
 For Râma's seed, which in her womb she bears.
 Next to the King my message thus convey :—
 ‘Thyself hast seen me purified by Fire,
 Yet now forsakest, fearing scandal's breath,—

230

240

Mere words : does this beseem Thy noble race ?
 Or shall I think it was no willing deed,
 But forced upon thee, O most glorious King,—
 A fate inexorable, by my sins
 Drawn down from former lives ? It must be so :
 For once, Beloved ! thou didst rather choose
 Exile with me than Lakshmi's offered charms :
 I ousted her, abiding in thy home :
 Her jealous fury triumphs o'er me now !

250

“ ‘ Befits it me, who through thy favour late
 Myself was styled Protectress of my sex,
 When Demons plagued their husbands, now forlorn
 To seek protection at a stranger's hand,
 While Thou still reignest glorious ? Thinkest Thou
 That I would longer bear this maimèd life,
 All empty now that Thou hast cast me off,
 Did not I bear in me thy precious seed,—
 Which bids me live ? But, once Thy son is born,
 Unswerving I shall fix my weary eyes
 On yon bright Sun, and by severest modes
 Of penance strive that in some future life
 Thou only be my Lord,—my Lord for aye !
 And since all ranks and classes claim the care
 (For so the Law ordains) of virtuous Kings,
 So in my banishment I claim Thy care,
 No less than Holy men with whom I dwell ! ’ ”

260

So Lakshman promised to fulfil her hest,

And left her presence : then, by grief o'erborne,
With straining throat she wailed like stricken hind.

270

In sympathy gay peacocks ceased their dance,
Trees shed their blossoms, deer the fragrant grass
They scarce had cropped : through all the forest passed
A moan unending. Guided by the sound,
The Poet-Saint, whose sympathetic grief—
When he beheld the bird so ruthlessly
Slain by a huntsman,—found heroic verse,
Came to her from his quest of fragrant grass
And altar-fuel. Sîtâ reverently

Saluted him, restraining her lament,
And driving back hot tears that dimmed her eyes :
To whom the Saint, who marked her fruitful womb,
Gave blessing for her offspring :—then he spake :—

280

“ By Holy intuition well I know,
My daughter, that thy Lord, by slander moved,
Put thee away though guiltless : grieve not then,
Fair Princess of Videha ! Thou shalt reach
Thy father's home, not distant from these groves.

Thy glorious Husband, well I know, has drawn
The barb of sorrow from this Triple World,

290

Is faithful to his word, all boasting hates,—
Yet for his cruel dealing with thee, Queen,
I greatly blame him ! His renownèd Sire
Claimed me as friend ; thy father saves from tears
All pious Hermits ; 'midst true, loyal wives
Thou hast chief place :—all this my heart constrains

To pity and to shield thee. Dwell secure
Here in the Sacred grove, where savage beasts
With us consorting milder moods assume !
Here shall thy cleansing be, when thou shalt bear 300
Unblemished offspring. Here in Tamasâ,
Whose waves dispel the gloom of ignorance,
Whose banks with Hermits' huts are thronged, whose isles
Smoke ever with the fragrant sacrifice,
Thou day by day shall bathe, till peace return
To bless thy spirit. Munis' daughters here,
With offerings in their time of flowers or fruit,
Soft-voiced, who for the altar gather grain
From land untilled,—will charm thy grief away.
And, fostering the nurslings of the grove 310
With slender water-jars, as suits thy strength,
Doubt not that, ere thine own dear Son be born,
Thou 'lt know a mother's joy !”

Most gratefully

His kindness she received : the Poet-Sage,
Whose heart for pity melted, led her home
To where around his hut-door tamed wild beasts
And timid deer were clustered. There the Queen,
Bowed down with sorrow, he to the Saints' pure wives
Gave in strict trust, well-pleased that she was come :—
So, when the Moon's sweet essence has been drunk 320
By Saints Divine, she to the moon-plants yields
Her latest light,—and straight begins to wax.

When night drew on, to crown his welcoming,

They gave a hut to dwell in, where was spread
 A couch of hallowed skins ; and light shone soft
 From well-trimmed lamp, with fragrant oil new-filled.
 There dwelt She, set apart by holy chrism,
 By all who came high-honoured, clad in bark,—
 And throve on rustic fare, till at full time
 She bore her noble Husband offspring pure.

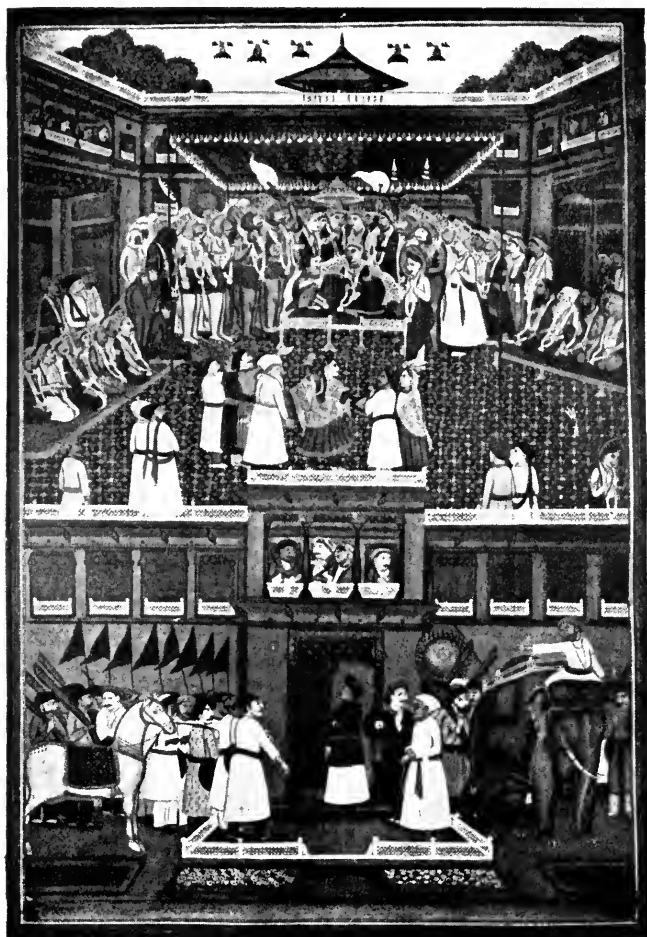
330

But Lakshman bore her message to the King,—
 And hoped that when He heard her sad reproach
 Remorse might move him to recall the doom.
 Then Râma fell a-weeping, as the Moon
 In winter showers down snow ;—by slander stung,
 He thrust his Sîtâ from his home, yet still
 Alone she ruled his heart. By strength of will
 And wisdom's lessons He restrained his grief,
 Gave all his mind to guard the tribes of men,
 And—freed from passion's sway—his people ruled,
 Not more enriched than others. Brighter shone
 The Kingdom's Fortune, reigning now sole Queen,
 Sole mistress of the King, who, moved by fear
 Of slanderous tongues, had banished his dear Wife.

340

But Sîtâ, when she knew her mighty Lord,
 Dread Râvaṇ's victor, took no second spouse,
 But—worshipping her image—spent his days
 In sacrifice, was greatly comforted,
 And much endured, nor sank beneath the weight
 Of grief for severance from her loyal Lord.

350



RĀMA'S COURT

CANTO XV

The slaying of Lavaṇa : Râma vanquishes Death : Sîtâ bears twin Sons, and at a Sacrifice is restored, and vanishes : the passing of Râma.

So, Sîtâ banished, Râma took delight
No more with any, save sea-girdled Earth.

Then came the Ascetics, who by Jamnâ dwelt,
And sought from him, the World's Protector, help,
For that the Demon Lavaṇa destroyed
Their Holy rites. On Râma they relied,
And so refrained their hands, nor smote the foe
With those tremendous weapons which they owned,—
Those awful curses which to use destroys
The meed of holy penance. Sure relief
From every hindrance Râma vowed to send,
For surely Viṣṇu's life on earth below
Had this one object,—virtue to uphold.
They told the Hero how this Demon-foe
Was to be slain,—“For,” said they, “once he's armed
With his dread spear, he scarce can be o'ercome :
Fall on him then when 'tis not in his hand !”

Then sent the King as champion Çatrughna,
 That he might quell the foe, and justify
 The name he bore. Each Prince of Raghu's stock 20
 Foes well could smite,—as in the rules of speech
 Exceptions test a law. Him Râma blessed :
 The Prince undaunted mounted his swift car,
 And drove adown the scented forest-glade
 That blazed with blossom. That well-ordered host,
 Which Râma's care sent with him as his aid,
 Served but as ornament, superfluous.
 He, flower of mighty warriors, held the way
 Which guiding Hermits showed ; his outriders
 Proclaimed his glory, ev'n as far-shot rays 30
 The Sun's great majesty. Now on the march,
 So long his journey was, one night he stayed
 Where dwelt Vâlmiki sage, whose deer looked up
 At rattling of his car. With special grace,
 Won by his rites austere, the noble Saint
 Received the Prince, and bade his tired steeds rest.

While there he tarried, even that same night,
 The Queen, great Râma's spouse, gave birth to twins,—
 Two perfect sons, as fruitful Earth two hosts
 Might bear for some great King. With pure delight 40
 The noble Prince heard of the happy birth
 Of Râma's sons ; then at first dawn, the Saint
 First reverently saluting, he his car
 Made quickly ready, thence unwearied passed.

Soon reached he Lavaṇ's stronghold, where oppressed

By Demon-power the woods their tribute paid,
 Great herds of cattle,—and the Râkshas came
 To meet his foe. All sooty-black he strode,
 With hair aflame, besmeared with fetid oils,
 Like some great funeral-pyre that stalked the plain, 50
 By Demon-hosts attended. Çatrughna
 Straightway attacked him, caught without his spear :—
 Who take their foes unharnessed win the fight !

With boastful words the Demon fell advanced :—
 “Sure the Creator saw my daily meal
 To-day was scanty : so in fear he sent
 Thee to complete it.” Threatening thus, and keen
 To swallow down his foe, a lofty tree,
 As 'twere a corn-stalk, fiercely he tore up
 And hurled it. In mid-flight Çatrughna's shaft 60
 Split the great trunk—which, as a shower of dust,
 Not solid block, his body struck. Forthwith,
 When so the tree was shattered, a great rock,—
 Huge as Death's fist, detached and firmly clenched,—
 The Giant cast ; that too, with Indra's bolt
 The Hero smote, and ground to pieces small,
 Less than sand-grains. Then, raising his right hand,
 The Demon hurled himself upon his foe,
 A very mountain crested with one tree,
 Dashed to the plain by awful whirlwind-blast. 70
 But Kṛishṇa's arrow cleft his heart : he fell :
 And falling shook the earth, but by his fall
 Took fear and trembling from all Hermit-hearts.

Down on his carcase swooped the vulture-hosts,
But on the Victor's head rained flowers from Heaven.

O'er Lavaṇ slain in this he most rejoiced,
He now was worthy shown of brotherhood
With Lakshmaṇ, far-renowned for overthrow
Of Indrajit. And, as the Hermits poured
Their thanks for aid vouchsafed upon his head, 80
He bowed it meekly, heightening so the worth
Of valour with the grace of modesty.

Then, clothed in manhood, free from low desires,
In form all lovely—on pure Jamnâ's banks
He founded Mathurâ, in days to come
For happy folk renowned, and nobly ruled,
And from the first with Heaven's best blessings dowered.
There from his palace-roof he looked, and saw
Well-pleased the course of Jamnâ, gleaming white
With flocks of *Chakravâkas*,—like a braid 90
Of golden tresses, kissing Earth's fair cheek.

Now, sage Vâlmîki, who bore equal love,
To Daçaratha and to Janaka,
Himself with solemn rites gave Sîtâ's sons
The second, higher birth ; and named the twins
Kuçā and Lava, since with fragrant grass
And hair of kine their mother had been cleansed.
First they the Word were taught, and Sacred Lore ;
Next, children still, they gathered from his lips
And sang the Hero-song himself had made. 100

They sang the Life of Râma, grand and sweet,
And singing charmed their mother's grief away,—
Her deep-set mourning o'er her banished state.

Now to the younger sons of Raghu's line—
Who blazed like steady fires—fair sons were born,
To each one two, from loving, faithful wives.
Then Çatrughna, whom Râma loved, to his—
To Çatrughâtin and Subâhu famed—
Gave each a city, Mathurâ the bright
To one, and to his brother Vidiçâ.

110

Then, fearing further to disturb the Sage,
And check his pious course, he left the groves
Where deer unmoving stood to hear the songs
Of Sîtâ's boys. Thence, self-subdued, he turned
To fair Ayodhyâ, gay with bannered streets,
Whose townsfolk bore him infinite regard
For slaying Lavaṇ. There amid his court,
With all his senate round him, Râma sat,
Now (since his Sîtâ was divorced) by Earth
Claimed only hers. He, as the victor bowed,
With joy received him : even as Indra hailed
Great Vishṇu, Kâlanemî's vanquisher.
He told him all his story, nought concealed,
But of the birth of Sîtâ's sons told not :
For so the Poet-Sage required, who thought
Himself to bring them when the time was ripe.

120

One day a Brâhman came, and brought his son—

A child untimely dead, thus making moan
 Before the palace-gate :—"O wretched Earth !
 What fate is thine, that from his Father's grasp 130
 Thou'rt fallen to Râma's hand,—bad changed for worse !"
 His plaint heard Râma, learned the cause, and grieved
 That now fell Death remorseless smote his realm,—
 A thing which shamed him. First with pitying words
 He soothed the father's grief, then bade him stay
 Awhile his guest :—"For I will seek out Death,
 And bring thy child again !" The Magic Car
 By thought he summoned, seized his warlike bow,
 And straight the Pride of Raghu's line went forth
 To smite the Lord of life. But suddenly— 140
 He scarce had started !—came a warning Voice
 From form unseen :—"Grave sin," it said, "defiles
 Thy land, O King ! Search, root it out !—this done,
 Thou shalt obtain thy wish !" This heard, the King
 Flew through wide Heaven to take away the sin
 Which plagued his people : sped the flying Car,
 Its pennon motionless, till soon he came
 To where, red-eyed from smoke, with head hung down,
 He saw one self-tormented on a tree.

Then Râma asked his name, and whence he sprang, 150
 Who answered him :—"Çambuka, Çûdra, I
 Thus seek high place in Heaven." But Râma knew
 'Twas sin he practised, who transgressed the Law
 Forbidding him to aspire ;—He grasped his sword
 To slay the sinner, and cut off his head,

Whose beard fierce sparks had singed, like frost-bit flower
Of lotus from the stalk. The slave, so slain
By Royal hands, then rose to Perfect Bliss,
His foul transgression washed away by death.

Then came the Saint Agastya, on the road 160
Greeting great Râma :—so the placid Moon
Is met by Autumn :—gem of price he gave,
A God might covet, which to win his grace
The Sea bestowed when he had drunk it up.
This on his arm he bound, which now no more
Clasped Sîtâ's neck, then took the homeward way ;
And found the Brâhman's son restored to life.
Appeased the Saint blessed where he cursed before,—
“Who else,” he cried, “can rescue ev'n the dead ?”

Thereafter Râma loosed for Sacrifice 170
A perfect Horse : then showered their choicest gifts,
As clouds pour water on the thirsty fields,
The Kings of Apes, of men, of Râkshasas.
Next, at his bidding, all the mighty Saints
From every quarter came, in Heaven or Earth,
To grace the Rite. They camping through the groves
Around Ayodhyâ made her glorious,—
With four great gates for mouths, like Brahmâ's self
Fresh from Creation's work. The Monarch's throne
In right was fixed : nay, Sîtâ's banishment 180
Itself enhanced his glory, since he took
No second wife, but lived in lonely state,
While still her golden image ruled his house.

The solemn Sacrifice began, with state
More splendid far than Sacred Law requires,
For Demons, loyal grown, no more disturbed,
But guarded it from harm. Then Sîtâ's sons,
At bidding of their great Preceptor, sang
In many places to the attentive throngs
Vâlmîki's Song of Râma ; to their depths 190
They stirred the souls of men with Râma's deeds,
Vâlmîki's matchless strains, their own sweet tones
Like Heaven's minstrelsy. With strange delight,
Throned 'midst his brothers, Râma marked their forms
That charmed all eyes, and heard their soft, sweet song.
The assembled crowd, attent to hear their strain,
Dissolved in tears, as when a forest-glade
In early morning stillness drips with dew.
Amazed they saw, with fixed unwinking eyes,
How like the minstrel-boys were to the King,— 200
By age and dress distinguished, only so.
Nor moved their skill such wonder in men's hearts
As when they saw them carelessly put by
The King's rich, loving gifts. Whereat the King
Asked who had taught them? Who had framed the song?
But when they named Vâlmîki, Râma went
To meet the Sage, his brothers following,
And at his feet the Kingdom and Himself
Laid freely down. The Bard, all-pitiful,
Presenting Sîtâ's boys, the King's own sons, 210
Chose as his boon that She should be called home.

The King, rejoicing yet perplexed, replied :—
 “Thou knowest, Father, how thy Child, my Spouse,
 By Fire’s ordeal proved herself to me
 A stainless wife ; but, wiled by Demon-craft,
 The people held her soiled. Bid Sîtâ then
 Convince them too ; so will I, at thy word,
 Receive her back, pure mother of my sons !”

Thus Râma pledged his faith : forthwith the Saint
 By trusty messengers bade Sîtâ come,—
 As pious deeds call blessings from the Gods.
 Then on the morrow Râma summoned all
 Ayodhyâ’s citizens, and bade the Saint
 Fulfil his promise : who led Sîtâ up
 With her two sons to where the Monarch sat,
 As when with Hymn of consecrated verse
 Men hail the blessed Sun. Her very mien,
 Unruffled, clad in red, with eyes cast down,
 Proclaimed her pure. The people, deep abashed,
 Scarce raised their heads, like rice-blades bowed with
 grain,

And shunned her quiet gaze. With aspect grave
 The Saint assumed his seat, and solemn spake :—
 “Now, Daughter, show the people thou art pure
 Beyond all cavil : here thy husband sits
 To mark the trial !” Then an acolyte
 Brought her clear water, which she drank, then spake
 These words sincere :—“All-fostering Goddess Earth !
 If I in word, in thought, in deed have still

220

230

Held to my Lord, nor strayed from duty's path
One hair's-breadth,—hide me in thy loving arms !”

240

So spake the unsullied Wife ;—the plain was rent,
And from the gulf rose as a thunderbolt,
With shining halo crowned ; then Earth was seen,
Enthronèd high above a serpent's crest,
And girdled with the Sea. She strongly drew
Fair Sîtâ to her breast, though still her eyes
Were fixed on Râma, who in anguish cried,—
“ Forbear, forbear !” yet all in vain he prayed,
For with his Spouse Earth vanished from men's eyes.
Then Râma rose, to snatch his Sîtâ back,
Enraged with Earth,—until Vaçishṭha sage,
Who saw in all the hand of Fate, restrained
The furious Hero. Then, the Rite being o'er,
The King with feasting and with noble gifts
The high Saints honoured and his friends, when all
Went home well-pleased :—and to his Sîtâ's sons
He gave the perfect love that had been hers.

250

So, being blessed with heirs, by sage advice
Of Yudhajit, as Kingly appanage
He gave to Bharat all the Sindhu land :
Who vanquished in fierce fight Gandharva hosts,
Forbade them use of arms, and them restrained
Henceforth to minstrel-craft ; his noble sons,
Taksha and Pushkala, he crowned as chiefs,
Each in a city named from him ; and straight

260

Himself went back to Râma. Lakshmaṇa,
 At Râma's bidding, in Karâpatha
 Set up as Kings his sons,—great Angada
 And famous Chandraketu. Those three Kings,
 Their sons thus settled, stately obsequies 270
 Paid to their mothers, who had lately passed
 To meet their Lord in Heaven's unfading bowers.

Then Death in Muni's semblance came, and thus
 Addressed the King :—" Bid all withdraw, that so
 Our conference may be secret !" and 'twas done.
 Death told his name, and said :—" By God's command
 I bid thee mount to Heaven !" Now Lakshmaṇa
 Stood at the door, and—though he knew 'twas sin—
 Broke in upon their secret talk ; for more
 He feared Durvâsa's curse, who urgently 280
 Desired to see the King. Then, to atone
 For having made his Brother break his word,
 In deep devotion on Sarâyû's banks
 He shed his earthy vesture. Râma now,
 One quarter of his essence so being gone
 To Heaven before him, staggered,—as on Earth
 Fair Virtue scarce can stand, one foothold lost.

Then in Kuçâvatî he Kuça placed,
 Sharp goad to all his foes ;—Çarâvatî
 To Lava he assigned, whose tender words 290
 Could move men's hearts to tears. Then steadfast-souled
 With Bharata he mounted up to Heaven,

The God of Fire preceding, while behind
 (In fealty to her Lord) Ayodhyâ came,
 Her buildings only left. The Monkey-hosts
 And Râkshasas, who knew the King's desire,
 Came after on the path his people's tears,—
 Big as *Kadamba*-blossoms,—had marked out.

Yet, though in Car Celestial He had passed
 To highest Heaven, in mercy to his folk
 He made Sarâyû's stream a watery way
 For them to follow. To its holy banks
 Men thronged thenceforward, as when herds of kine
 Crowd thirsting to cool streams,—and gave the name
 Gopratana, now famous through the Worlds.

300

And Vishṇu, when his scattered particles
 Again were gathered in the Soul Supreme,
 Framed a new Heaven, that there might dwell for aye
 Those souls of men, at once immortal grown.

Thus by his incarnation having wrought
 Deliv'rance for the Gods, and slain their foe,—
 Ten-headed Râvaṇa,—the God resumed
 That all-embracing, formless State, in which
 All worlds at last are merged, and left on Earth,
 To spread His glory through the realms of men,
 The Wind-god's son to rule the North: the South
 Vibhîṣaṇ ruled from Lankâ's scented isle.

310

CANTO XVI

*The Reign of Kuça:—how he returned to Ayodhyâ, and
wedded Kumudvatî.*

Now did the heroes seven of Raghu's line
 Raise Kuça, eldest-born and most renowned
 Of all their race for virtue, to the throne
 Of sovereign power ;—for, ever in their house
 Ruled love fraternal. All alike far-famed
 For commerce and bridge-building, skilled to tame
 The mighty elephant, they wisely ruled ;
 Nor sought to overstep their mutual bounds,
 As Ocean's waves encroach not on the shore.
 So smoothly flowed the current of their blood,
 Eight-fold divided, sprung from Vishṇu's heart,—
 The God four-armed,—who showered on men their gifts
 Ungrudging, like the Guardian Elephants,
 Sprung from the Sâma-Veda's holy verse.

10

One dark midnight, while burned with steady flame
 The chamber-lamps, and all the palace slept
 Save only he, to Kuça there appeared
 A woman's form, unknown before, and robed

As one who mourns a husband far away.
So stood that shape before him, mighty Prince, 20
As Indra splendid, victor o'er his foes,
Dear to his friends, not prizing Kingly state
Beyond its worth,—then, clasping suppliant hands,
She hailed him, “King !” Whereat, half-starting up
From where he lay, the Prince, amazed to see
How, like a shadow falling on a glass,
Through bolted doors she passed,—now questioned thus :
“How, Lady, couldst thou to my chamber come
Through fast-barred doors? no Hermit-dame thou seem'st,
But rather wearest garb of those that mourn, 30
Like lotus-clusters withered by the frost.
Who art thou, Fair one? who thy Lord? to me
Why com'st thou thus? Speak freely: yet beware,
For Raghu's noble race, self-disciplined,
Abhors all thought of sin!” She gravely spake:—
“I am, my Lord, that mourning City's Queen,
Blameless, deserted, since thy Father passed,
And took His subjects to the home above.
So I, more splendid once than Alakâ
For Royal festival, now in *thy* days, 40
Prince of the high Sun-race! lie desolate,
By thee neglected. Myriad empty homes,
With halls all silent, couches bare, are seen
Like sunset-skies, when at the death of day
Winds rend the clouds. Now jackals fiery-mouthed
Haunt the roads howling, seeking prey,—where girls

With gleam of tuneful anklets lately thronged.
Once did the water of my lakelets, struck
By dainty fingers, mock the lute's deep tone :
Now, wounded by the buffalo's sharp horn, 50
It shrinks sore hurt. And where pet peacocks homed
The trees are broken, silent is the lute ;
They, terrified, scarce 'scaping forest-fires,
Have turned to wildness. Blood-stained tigers couch,
And mark with traces of late-slaughtered deer
Stairways once painted by fair ladies' feet,
Bound for the bath. And pictured elephants,
That haunt the lotus-groves, and by their mates
Are fed with tender blossoms, lions tear
With crookèd claws ; the marble forms of sylphs, 60
Grey through the loss of paint, wear squalid robes
Of slimy cobra-sloughs. The fair Moon's beams,
Though pure as virgin-pearl, get back no ray
From tiles time-blackened of the palace-roof,
Now flecked with grass-tufts. Where sweet women plucked
With careful hands the garden-creeper flowers,
Foul apes and savage tear the boughs. At night
Unlighted now the windows, nor by day
Shine they with fairy faces ; spiders' webs
Defile the chambers, and the hearths are cold. 70
“ All scentless flows Sarâyû : tender forms
Bathe there no longer, nor do altars rise
Upon its islets,—nay, the hermits' huts
Deserted fall to ruin. Oh, my King !

Return, revive thy City's old renown !
 Here is no home for thee : in me thy Sire
 His mortal form resigned, and soared to Heaven !”

So prayed the City : then the gracious King,
 Well-pleased, consented : she with lightened heart
 Departed. Soon as morning dawned, the King 80
 Told to his Brâhman councillors what passed
 In that strange nightly vision : when they knew
 His stately Capital had sought his love,
 They blessed him highly. When a day was come
 Auspicious for his march, to holy Priests
 He gave Kuçâvatî : then with his Queens
 He sought Ayodhyâ, followed by his hosts,
 As showers of rain attend a cooling breeze.

The marching host a moving city seemed,
 Its banners waving groves that spread around, 90
 Its elephants like mounds for pleasure formed,
 Like palaces its stately chariots.

The mighty army, sent to clear the way
 To his ancestral home by that great King,
 O'er whom alone Imperial ensigns waved,
 Seemed like majestic Ocean urged to shore
 By lunar impulses. The solid earth,
 Unfit to bear the chariots' crushing weight,
 As on he marched, fled in a cloud of dust
 And filled the sky. Complete that army showed, 100
 Where'er 'twas seen,—preparing for the march,

Or moving stately on, or when encamped,
Not lacking aught. As on the Monarch swept,
So mighty was the trampling of his steeds,
Such plenteous ichor-streams his elephants
Rained from their brows,—that dust was turned to mud,
And mud to dust again. That host of men,
To thread its way through Vindhya's strait defiles,
Divided into bands, which, with their shouts
Like loudly-roaring Revâ, taught the caves
Resounding music. Through the Vindhya chain
The Monarch passed: crushed metal gilt his wheels,
His trumpets mingled with the myriad shouts
Of trampling hosts, and graciously he touched
The hillmen's offerings. Gangâ's sacred stream
At its most holy place he bridged, and crossed
With mighty elephants: the conscious waves
In awe flowed backward, while the snowy swans
Swift gliding through the air were royal fans.
The Triple River's waters he adored,
Now thronged with stately ships, on whose bright waves
Of yore his Fathers passed to Heavenly seats,
When Kapila in fury burnt them up,—
And those pure waters cleansed them from all stain.
At length the King reached clear Sarâyû's bank
By rapid marches, marked by monuments
Set up in hundreds by his mighty Sires,
In memory of continuous Sacrifice.

110

120

Now, as with wearied hosts he neared his goal,

Forth came to welcome them reviving airs,
Fresh from green groves round his ancestral home,
With pollen laden of bright-blossoming trees,
Cooled by Sarâyû's waves. The mighty King,
His people's darling, chief of all his race,
His foes all humbled, made the bannered hosts
Camp in his City's outskirts :—that fair town,
So captured, swarms of workmen from the King
Renewed in splendour, as with plenteous rain
Clouds cheer the earth, long parched by summer heat.

130

By his command the craftsmen skilled to build
First fasted, then did sacrifice, and paid
Due honour to the City, far-renowned
As home of sacred images. Himself
Thereafter occupied the palace-home
Ancestral, as a bridegroom claims his bride,
And gave his followers, as beseemed their rank,
To each a noble dwelling. So the town,
Its stables filled with steeds, great elephants
Tied in its courts, its market-places thronged,
Shone glorious as a bride whose every limb
With gems is laden. In his Father's home,
Its olden splendour all revived, the King—
Pure Sitâ's son,—dwelt happy, nor desired
The state of Swarga's Lord or Alakâ's !

140

150

Now Summer's heat came on,—and taught the fair
To don fine, jewel-studded robes, while hung

On radiant breasts their necklets, over stuff
 So thin it yielded to the softest sigh.
 When from the region which Canopus rules
 The Sun returned, the North a shower of snow 160
 Sent from Himâlaya, like rain of tears—
 Cool from a joyful heart. The days were long,
 As swoln by heat, night like a shadow seemed,
 Or both like spouses showed, whom angry words
 Had parted, now relenting. Pleasure-ponds,
 Whose waters daily shrinking left the steps
 With moss and lichen clothed, while lotus-stems
 Waved on the surface, like a fair one's waist.

Now through the groves of scented *Mallikâs*
 Bees, lighting with a flutter on the blooms 170
 That opening flung their sweets abroad,—one bee
 To every blossom,—numbered them. Now dropped
 From amorous maidens' ears *Çirîsha* flowers,
 Yet slowly fell to earth adown their cheeks,
 Fresh-marked with scars of love and damp with sweat,
 To which the petals clung. The rich, reclined
 On marble couches, safe in darkened halls,
 Where cooling streams were forced and scented spray
 Thrown on them, shunned the heat. Love gathered
 strength,

Relaxed when Spring went by, in ringlets hid 180
 That after bathing hung down limp, or twined
 (To charm the eye) with flowers of *Mallikâ*.
 The *Arjun*-tree's long shoot, with pollen grey,

Seemed like Love's bowstring, smashed by Çiva's wrath,
Not satisfied with burning up the God.

Now all that lovers lacked the season gave,—
Sweet-scented mango-blossoms, strong rice-wine,
And fresh *Pâtâla* flowers. The burning heat
Made two delights most precious, Soma's beams
That cooled men's throbbing limbs, and their mild Prince 190
Whose goodness soothed their hearts :—both now were high.

Then longed the King in pure Sarâyû's stream,
More grateful for the heat,—whose dancing waves
Bore gladsome swans and dropping creeper-blooms
On their clear breasts,—to sport with his fair Queens.
So in fit pomp and splendour for the Bath
The King set forth, like Vishṇu in his might,
To where by placid waters tents were pitched,
While skilful arms had swept the river clear
Of scaly monsters. Maidens tripped in haste 200
Down by the stairways to the bank, and scared
With clanging of their armlets gliding swans,—
Their anklets tinkling as they moved. The King
Looked on approving while they bathed and splashed
In full delight ; then with a handmaid skilled
To ply the oar embarked in pleasure-skiff,
And thus addressed her, as with yâk-tail fan
She gently cooled his brow :—" See, maiden, see !
Sarâyû's stream, where bathe my happy Queens,
Tinged with the varied colours from their limbs, 210
Shows like a sunset-cloud with rainbow streaked.

“Now from fair ladies’ eyes the wavelets, stirred
By passage of our boat, have washed away
The healing unguents, soon again laid on
As joyous blushes mantle in their cheeks.
The languorous beauties, whose luxuriant charms
Impede their motions, yet in pure delight
Forget their weakness, spread their jewelled hands,
And nimbly cleave the waves. *Çirîsha* flowers,
Their brilliant ear-drops, as they swim fall off,
Float on the current, lure for silvery fish
In quest of water-weeds. Absorbed in play
They strike the stream, while on their bosoms
bright

220

The pearly necklets rest, and drops of foam
Between them falling mock their silvery sheen.
Here may we see whate’er the poet’s mind
Compares with women’s beauties: eddying waves
Like rounded navels, ripples for their brows,
And ruddy geese show like their shapely breasts.

“Now on the ear a gladsome murmur strikes
Of tuneful waters, blending with their songs,
Like note of drum, while peacocks on the banks
Spread wide their tails and answer with soft notes.
Tight cling their garments to their waists, the belts
Are limp and wet, nor tinkle now their gems
But sparkle silent, as through darksome night
The still stars shine. In joyous sport they splash
Each one her fellow, each in turn shakes out

230

His royal robes, he saw his arm was bare,
And knew the bracelet lost. Sore grieved was he :
For much he prized it, gift of his great Sire
And pledge of victory, not for sordid greed :—
For light as worthless flowers he held mere gauds.

270

Then straight he ordered fishers, boatmen, all
Who haunt the stream, to seek the gem : they toiled,
And dived untiring, but in vain : then told,—
Their faces marred and troubled,—how they sped :—
“ We spared no toil, great King ! but thy rich gem,
Sunk in the wave, we found not : much we fear
That mighty Kumuda, the Nâga-Prince,
Who dwells beneath the waters, coveted
And stole the jewel.” Flashed his eyes with rage,
He strung his war-bow, strode in fury down
Straight to the river-bank, and fixed the shaft
Unerring, named from Garuḍa, to slay
The Serpent-Prince. But scarce the shaft was laid,
When, panic-struck, the stream raised quivering waves
As suppliant hands, and smote the banks, and roared—
As from a pit a captured elephant.

280

In terror fled its scaly monsters too,
And from the waters swift the Serpent-Prince
Rose, with his virgin Sister :—so of yore
Sprang from the churnèd Ocean Indra's tree
With fairest Lakshmî. On they came, with hands
Outstretched the gem restoring : his keen bolt
The King held back,—for good men quickly quench

290

Their fury when entreated. Kumuda,
 Bold warrior, did obeisance to the King,
 Son of the Mightiest, scourge of all his foes,
 Anointed Monarch ; bowed his haughty head,
 And thus addressed him :—" Well I know thee, Lord !
 Great Vishṇu's Son, His other self, thou art,
 Begotten when He came to work for men 300
 The great Deliv'rance ! How should I oppose
 Thy mighty will, who rather seek thy grace ?
 'Twas this my sister who, in eager play,
 Her ball was seeking driven from her hand,
 And saw and caught, as meteor-like it fell,
 Thy precious bracelet, emblem of success.
 Restore it to thy long and potent arm,
 Scarred by the bowstrong's use, which like a shield
 Protects the worlds ! Disdain not now, O King !
 Kumudvatî, my sister, who would serve 310
 Before thy feet, and from thy mind erase
 The memory of her crime !"

The Nâga-Prince

Then ceasing humbly offered back the gaud,
 To whom the King made answer :—" Joyfully
 I hail thee brother !" Then with all his train
 Kumuda joined by solemn marriage-rite
 His sister, pride of all her kin, to him,
 High Chief of Raghu's line ; who, when he took
 The maiden's hand before the sacred Fire,
 Bound with auspicious knot of purest wool, 320

Heard through the skiey realms Celestial songs
With Heavenly music joined, while wondrous clouds
Poured down soft, copious rain of sweetest flowers.

When now alliance firm that King had made,
Whom Sîtâ bore to Râma, mighty Lord
Of all Three Worlds, with royal Kumuda,
Fifth son of Takshaka, the Serpent-King—
Two Worlds rejoiced :—since fear of Vishṇu's Bird,
Who ever rages for his father's death,
The Nâgas now dismissed ; and over Earth,
No more by Serpents vexed, loved Kuça reigned.

CANTO XVII

The wise Rule of King Atithi.

IN happy wedlock joined Kumudvatî
 Bore to her Lord a son, great Atithi,
 Who soothed their hearts, as sleep most peaceful comes
 Just at the dawn. He cheered his Father's soul,
 Rich blessing to both parents and their kin,
 Unmatched for splendour : so the radiant Sun
 With bright beams purifies both North and South.

Him first his Sire, of Sages chief, that Lore
 Essential taught which graced through each descent
 The line of Raghu ; then sought fitting brides
 From royal houses. Well he deemed, high King,
 Heroic, self-controlled, that in his Son,—
 Not less high-born, heroic, self-controlled,—
 His single self was nobly multiplied.
 For Kuça's virtues, and his high descent,
 Great Indra called him friend,—with whom he joined
 In war against the Daityas, and was slain
 By Durjaya,—whom he too slew in fight.

So died he ; and the fair Kumudvatî,

His faithful Spouse, soon followed him in death,
As moonlight fails when fails the waning Moon,
Loved by the lily. Kuça high in Heaven
Held half great Indra's throne, Kumudvatî
Was bosom-friend of Çachî, and enjoyed
The fruit of Pârijâta, Tree of Boons.

20

Now, as their Lord had bidden when he went
To smite the Daityas, his grave Senators
Anointed to the Kingdom his wise son,
The famous Atithi. To crown him King
By skilful hands a Royal residence,
With lofty altar hallowed,—pillars four
Supporting it,—they ordered to be built.
There on a throne of state he took his place,
And nobles of the Kingdom served, and brought
In golden vessels from the holiest streams
Pure waters ; deep, entrancing notes the drums
Boomed forth, presaging prosperous, endless reign,
Then, as was taught by Elders of his house,
He sprinkled *Dûrva*-grass and barley-stalks,
The fig-tree's bark and lotus-buds,—for rites
Of solemn cleansing. Next the Brâhmans came,
The royal House-Priests first, with solemn pomp
And anthems high, to crown that noble King.

30

40

The sacring waters plashed upon his head,
Then riverlike flowed down, as Gangâ's streams
Erst flowed through Çiva's locks. At once the King,
Whom heralds loudly praised, showed like a cloud,

Majestic, hailed by thirsting cuckoos' song.
Thus purified with water, which the Priests
With Holy Texts had blessed, the King flashed forth 50
In brighter glory,—as the lightning-flame
Spreads wide when dashed with water. When the rites
Of Coronation were complete, he gave
Rich gifts to tribal patriarchs, loading them
With largesse far beyond their offered gifts.
Amazed and joyful, blessings they called down,
Which yet his great achievements cast in shade,
So mighty waxed he. Mercy next he showed,
Whose high command loosed every prisoner's chain,
Gave life to those condemned to die, unyoked 60
The patient oxen, gave the kine relief
From cruel milking :—yea, all caged birds
That pined for freedom he released, to fly
Where'er they would. Anon the ivory Throne
He mounted, where in stately hall it stood,
Pure, curtained round, to assume the Royal robes.

His locks were first with fragrant unguents dressed,
Next careful tiremen choicest jewels gave,
Last on his head, where rows of pearls reposed
Twined in the diadem, a ruby rare 70
(Bathed in its flashing rays) they set. His limbs
With sandalwood they rubbed, as sweet of scent
As purest musk ; they stained his velvet skin
With comely *Rochana*. Enthroned he sat,
In fullest Royal state, with crown on head,

Clad in soft silken robe, where swans were wrought,—

And drew the eyes of all men, worthiest seen

To woo and win the Genius of the realm.

Resplendent was the form that met his gaze,

Reflected from the golden mirror's plane :

80

On Meru's slopes so shines the Wishing-tree

Beneath the Sun's first beams. He entered then

The audience-hall, which rivalled Indra's own,

'Mid loud acclaim of pursuivants, who bore

The Royal standards. Glorious then he sat

Upon his Father's throne, well-canopied,

Before whose footstool Kings were wont to lay

Their jewelled crowns. New lustre shed the King

Through all the festal palace when he came,

As when the famous jewel *Kaustubha*

90

Gleams on great Vishṇu's breast, not unadorned

By rich Çrīvatsa. Thus, his nonage past,

To Royal state advanced, more splendid still

He shone than e'en before : as shines the Moon

With brighter lustre when its crescent shape

Has grown to fulness. Cheerful looks he wore,

And spoke to all his servants smiling, so

That in their eyes he seemed Persuasion's self.

In glory matching Indra rode the King,

High on an elephant whose might could vie

100

E'en with Airāvata's—and made his town

To rival Svarga, while his standards waved

Like Wishing-trees. Now o'er his head alone

The parasol of Royal state was raised,
Which, white, unspotted, purged from all men's hearts
Their poignant sorrow for his Father's death.

In nature smoke comes first ere fire appears,
Mist veils the Sun's rays till he gather strength ;
But Atithi, by no such law restrained
To weakness, shone at once with all the might
Of gathered virtues. City-matrons gazed
Where'er he passed, with eyes of loyal love,
As in clear Autumn night's unwinking eyes
Attend the Polar Star in steadfast groups.
Revered in stately shrines, Ayodhyâ's Gods
In chiselled shapes stood round about the King,
And richly blessed him. Ere the altar stones,
Wet with the Anointing waters, dried again,
His burning fame had reached far Ocean's shore.

110

Keen shafts he wielded, sage Vaçishṭha's spells
Lent aid resistless : what could e'er withstand
Their power united ? Daily in his court
Himself sat with his judges, patient heard
The cause of each contestant, straitly sought
Where truth might lurk, maturely weighed the proof,—
Then gave his sentence, cleaving fast to right.
The people who, in his great Father's time,
Had grown as rivers do with vernal showers,
New-ruled by him—as these with Autumn rains—
Reached Fortune's flood-mark. Not a word untrue
E'er passed his lips, no gift was e'er sought back,—

120

130

Nor e'er his word recalled,—save only when
He pardoned and restored a humbled foe.

Youth, power, and beauty,—each alone breeds pride ;
And all in him were met, yet his great heart
Swelled not with pride unduly. Day by day
Devotion in his subjects stronger grew,
Till, like a tree whose roots are firmly fixed,
In vigorous youth no force could shake his throne.

But foreign foes are distant, nor will give
Perpetual trouble ; with unwearied care
'Gainst banded foes within, the passions six,
He waged unceasing war. Fair Fortune too,
Inconstant else, for him unchanging wore
A smiling aspect : so a streak of gold
Cleaves to the touchstone. Harsh and mild by turns,
The Monarch sought his ends ; for grace unmixed
Soon warps to weakness, harshness unrestrained
Is in its issue savage cruelty.

Whate'er was done on Earth straightway he knew,
For spies he scattered round him, as the Sun
Unclouded darts his rays on every side.
All duties which by night or day the Law
Prescribes for Kings, unswerving and untired
The King fulfilled. For daily with the pure
He held his council,—yet his purposes
(Debated with closed doors) were ne'er betrayed.
For needful rest he slept, yet ever watched
Through spies spread all abroad 'mongst friends and foes,

Yet each from other hid. When he made war,
Though his own fortresses defied attack,
He ever sought the foe : the king of beasts,
Who tears down elephants, skulks not in caves.
His plan he thought out well, prepared his paths,
Success securing : rice-grains in the blade
Mature in secret. High his fortunes rose,
Yet turned he not aside to crooked ways,
Like Ocean which in highest floodtide shapes
Its course up river-mouths. Strong to repress,
If discontent had ever reared its head,
So wisely ruled he that among his folk
No stern reproof was needed. Only foes
Of equal might that valiant, powerful King
Made war upon : so forest-fires, though urged,
By rushing winds, attack not running streams.

160

170

'Mid Justice, Pleasure, Profit,—undismayed
He held the balance even, nor allowed
That any should prevail beyond its due,
Nor crush another. Knowing well that friends
Avail not in misfortune, but when swoln
With too great power resist the hand that raised,
He kept them in the mean. His foemen's strength
Or weakness well he pondered, and his own
For strength or wealth ;—if his the better part,
Assailing boldly,—else he abode attack.
Well knowing “ power to help from riches comes,”
He stored up treasure ; so the cloud, well-stored

180

With watery wealth, is thanked by Châtakas.
His own designs promoting, still to nought
He brought his foemen's counsels ; each weak spot
He fortified, but smote where *they* were weak.

190

A warlike King, the army, which his Sire
Had wisely fostered, exercised in arms
And apt to fight, was ever at his call.
The triple Kingly power he firmly held,
Fixed like the jewelled crest a serpent wears ;
No foe could win it from him, while he drew
Their power from them, as magnet's hidden force
Attracts the iron. Through his peaceful realm
Merchants unhindered plied their trade in boats
On mighty streams as on calm lakes, through woods
Safe as in royal parks, on mountain roads
Secure as in their homes. Protecting well
Ascetic works from hindrance, wealth from thieves,
He took the royal sixth throughout his realm,
From every man as each with ease could pay.

200

In valour he was Kârtikeya's peer,—
Well-versed in policy, used force or craft
As either best might serve. The Kingly power
In phases four by just proportion used,
Of all he took the fruit ; no favourite
Absorbed the gains. All crafty ways of war,
All treacherous wiles he knew, but never used :
But fought uprightly, so that Victory—
Fair Goddess—who on Hero-souls attends,

210

Loved and clave to him. Wherefore all his foes
By his great might he quickly smote, as smites
An elephant in pride the rival bulls,
And seldom was provoked to take the field.

Now when the Moon is full it quickly wanes,
And Ocean after floodtide quickly falls,—
Like both the Monarch waxed, but waned not so.
To him, the mighty, generous King, repaired,—
As clouds to Ocean—beggars destitute,
And got such guerdon that themselves grew rich,
And gave to others. Hating words of praise,
His actions all yet wōn their glorious meed ;
No flattering tongue he favoured, yet his fame
Spread through the world. Now on the lily pale
Alone the moonbeams fall, the Sun's hot rays
The lotus only hails : his virtues' light
His foes not less illumined than his friends.
His very aspect scared away the wrong,
By truth's bright essence darkness he dispelled,
And all men held beneath his sovran sway,—
As rules the Sun in strength this nether World.
To crush his foes he put forth all his might,
Yet was his purpose worthy,—since he sought
This only, to complete the great Horse-sacrifice.

220

230

240

Thus in his valour struggling on the road
Prescribed by Holy Writ,—as Indra rose
To Heaven's high throne, so he on Earth became
King o'er all Kings ; and, for his excellence,

Fifth Guardian of the World, Sixth Element,
Eighth mountain with the Seven,—he was named.
In reverence Kings received his high commands,
And placed the scrolls above their diadems,
As though to shade them, now their parasols
Were torn away :—so Indra rules the Gods.

Now with such wealth at his Horse-sacrifice 250
He guerdoned all the sacrificing priests,
That they his name extolled as equalling
Kuvera's own. From Indra plenteous rains
Were showered, and Yama kept back deadly plagues ;
The Lord of Ocean and its monsters gave
To merchants prosperous voyage, who crossed in ships
His mighty waters : mindful of the past,
And Raghu's threats, Kuvera still increased
The Monarch's treasure ; while the mighty Four
Who guard the Worlds so highly honoured him, 260
As though themselves were suppliants for his aid.

CANTO XVIII

The later Kings of Raghu's Race.

King Atithi, triumphant o'er his foes,
On his fair Queen, Princess of Nishadha,
A son begat that matched the Serpent-King,
As Nishadha thence known to all mankind.
Great was his Sire's delight to see the youth
High-souled, and destined to his folk to bring
Rich blessing, as the eye delights to view
A waving cornfield, whence with fostering rains
Rich harvest shall be won. His mighty Sire,
Kumudvatî's great son, who all Earth's joys
Had in their fulness drained, content resigned
The Royal State, and mounted up to Heaven,
Well won by stainless deeds on Earth below.

Then Kuça's grandson ruled, whose eyes were bright
And languished like the lotus, hiding deep
His purposes, unmatched in might, whose arm
Stretched wide, as stretch a city's girdling walls ;
And while he ruled the sea-girt Earth, save his
No Royal fans were waved o'er Kingly head.

He died ; and Nala came, and ruled mankind. 20
 Fierce as red fire, like lotus shone his face,
 Who crushed his foes as elephants crush reeds :
 So great his glory that 'twas sung in Heaven !
 To him a son was born, fair as the sky,
 Renowned as Nabhas, pleasant to his folk
 As clouds of Autumn. To that mighty son
 North Koçala's fair realm he glad gave o'er,
 And—as in age 'tis meet—with savage beasts
 He made his home, escaping once for all
 From earthly shackles. Nabhas King begat 30
 Great Pundarîka, famous in the worlds,
 'Midst Kings most kingly, who received the realm
 Devolving from his Sire, who passed to Heaven :—
 When Lakshmî, Lady of the lotus-face,
 Embraced him, Vishṇu's likeness :—strong his bow,
 His shafts unerring :—He gave o'er the realm
 To Kshemadhanvan, dear for patient love,
 Well-skilled to rule the people, and himself
 As Hermit gave his strength to rites austere.

Of Kshemadhanvan sprang a godlike son, 40
 A skilful Lord of war, Devânîka,
 Extolled in highest Heaven. Their mutual love
 So brightly beamed, the Father loved his son
 As Sire ne'er loved before,—which love that son
 In full requited. That most virtuous Sire
 Gave to his son the yoke of Royal rule,
 And by the merit of pure Sacrifice

Passed to the Sacrificer's home on high.

Then Devânîka reigning next begat
 Ahînagas, Lord of himself and Lord 50
 Of sweet, persuasive words, by friends and foes
 Beloved alike ; for tender words of love
 Enthral e'en timorous deer. He ruled the Earth,
 That strong-armed Hero, when his Sire went home :
 Who turned in early youth from vile men's paths,
 And shunned all wasteful vice ; men's secret thoughts
 He surely knew,—and wisely ruled the Worlds,
 Scarce less in might than Vishṇu come to earth,
 With fourfold Royal powers in equipoise.
 He triumphed o'er his foes ; then took the road 60
 That leads to Final Bliss, and in his stead
 Fair Lakshmî Pâriyâtra, his great son,
 Took to her arms,—who held his haughty head
 Above the mountains. Çîla followed him,
 A noble nature, strong and broad of chest,
 Who with flint-headed arrows smote his foes,
 Yet modest blushed to hear his actions praised.

That King of blameless soul devolved the realm,
 While yet a youth, on Kuça, prudent Prince,
 And turned to pleasure ;—for a King's high place, 70
 Beset with cares, keeps pleasure far away.
 Yet him, with beauty dowered nor sated yet
 With love, did envious Age,—that takes in love
 No more delight,—first seize, and then cut off.

Unnâbha followed Kuça, mighty-framed,

A very Vishṇu, round whom pivoted
 The circle of Earth's kings. Came after him
 His son, high Vajranâbha, Indra's peer,
 Who thundered in the war,—and wedded Earth,
 With diamond mines resplendent. Heaven he won 80
 By mighty deeds, and Earth sea-girdled gave
 To Çankhana his son, who all his foes
 Uprooted, offering gems from all her mines.

When he was gone, there mounted Raghu's throne
 A King renowned, far-famed as is the Sun,
 Lord of bay-steeds,—fair as the Açvins,—known
 As Dhushitâçva, sending far his steeds
 To Ocean's margin. Çiva's grace he won :
 And of his loins sprang Viçvasaha, loved 90
 By all men, son indeed, yet strong to shield
 The whole broad Earth ;—who, holding fast the right,
 Begat Hiranyanâbha bearing part
 Of Vishṇu's essence, scorching thus his foes
 More fiercely as a forest-fire gains strength
 When winds attend it. Dhushitâçva then,
 The debt he owed his Ancestors discharged,
 And longing for Eternal pleasures, crowned
 His son, long-armed and mighty, and himself—
 In virtue perfect—donned the dress of bark.

His heir, pride of the Sun-race, Priestly King 100
 Of Northern Koçala, begat a son,
 Kauçalya named, a second Moon for grace,
 Delighting all men's eyes :—who reigned, when passed

His Sire to Glory. He, whose fame had spread
 To Brahmâ's council, crowned as King his son,
 Brahmishṭha, yearning for the Bliss Supreme
 Of union with the Highest. In his son,
 Crown of his race, who reigned in perfect peace,
 His subjects long rejoiced,—nay, wept for joy.
 Fair sons made glad his heart,—but Putra chief,
 In form like Viṣṇu, served by Garuḍa,
 By duteous service of his Sire made great,
 Whose eyes were like the lotus, made him head
 Of happy fathers. To maintain the line
 He left him firmly stablished, then forsook
 All earthly objects, bathed in Gangâ's streams,
 And passed to Heaven. To Putra his fair Queen
 Bore Paushya, at the full of Pusha's moon,
 More splendid than the topaz : under him,
 As 'neath new stars auspicious, men rejoiced
 In boundless happiness. When age crept on,
 The noble King gave to his son the realm,
 Himself he gave to saintly Jaimini,
 And, shrinking from re-birth, by works austere
 Attained absorption in the Soul Supreme.

110

120

Then Dhruvasandhi, steadfast as the Pole,
 Ruled all wide Earth, a loyal, upright Prince,
 With whom consenting all his foes made peace.
 Him lion-like, wide-eyed as is a fawn,
 While yet his son Sudarçana,—whose grace
 Charmed all men's sight as doth the waxing Moon,—

130

Was but a child, too eager in the chase,
A mighty lion slew. When so to Heaven
That King had passed, the council with one voice
With solemn rites enthroned his only son
Lord of Ayodhyâ, to uphold the race ;—
For all the people mourned their Kingless state.

Thus Raghu's line, whose chief was now a child,
Showed like the night while still the Moon is young,
Or like a forest where one Lion-cub
Alone doth range, or as a silent lake
Before its lilies bloom. When on the Throne
He sat, the people deemed his riper age
Would prove him equal to his mighty Sire :
Full oft they'd seen a cloud that seemed no more
Than handbreadth wide, by East wind driven, veil
The whole broad sky. So stately was his mien,
The people gazed on him with not less awe
Than on his Father, when—scarce six years old—
In Royal robes he passed along the ways
On noble elephant, yet childlike clung
Fast to the driver. Though as yet too small
To fill his Father's throne, his glory shone
So wide about him that he seemed to swell—
As clothed in lustrous gold—and filled the seat.

Kings laid their crowns in homage at his foot,
Which, tinged with red and hanging from the Throne
A little way, scarce touched the golden stool.

140

150

Well is the sapphire named the "great blue stone,"
Most precious though 'tis small : so, well beseemed 160
That Royal child the title "Mighty King!"
Such potent words came from his infant lips,
On either side fan-guarded, boyish curls
Still hanging down his cheeks,—their sound went forth
Far to great Ocean's shores, nor died e'en there.
Silk gold-embroidered twined around his brow,
Whereon impressed he bore the Royal Mark,
With which—though still he smiled—he turned to tears
The smiling faces of his foemen's wives.
Soft as *Çirîsha* buds, too heavy gems 170
Had tired his limbs : yet in him dwelt such force
And dignity, he bore the unmeasured weight
Of all the careful World. Ere yet he learned
His letters all, traced on a writing-board,
By converse with the wise he fully grasped
All lessons of right rule and policy.

Not yet had Lakshmî in his heart won place,
But—longing for his manhood—bashfully
Embraced him only 'neath the umbrella's shade.
Though still unpractised in the archer's craft, 180
Nor marked as yet with scars from bowstring wound,
Nor yet he grasped the sword-hilt,—Earth dwelt safe,
Protected by his arm. As time rolled on,
His limbs gained strength and bulk ; the Virtues too
That win a people's love, blest heritage,
At first but seedlings, grew to stately trees.

No toil it was to teach him ; for he learnt
The threefold Science, root of three-branched Lore,
And seemed in learning merely to recall
What in a former life he well had known,—
And therewithal he won his people's hearts.

190

In arms at length made perfect, he shone forth
A glorious Archer ; swelling out the chest,
Poised lightly on the foot, with crest erect,
He laid his arrow to the string, and drew
The notch right to his ear. Full soon he reached
The flower of youth, sweet season of delight,—
A charm for women's love, the perfect bloom
That crowns Desire's fair tree, from passion's plant
Luxuriant shoot,—or charm of loveliness
Spread over all his limbs, boon nature's gift.
Then did the Kingly State and Earth herself,
At first his only brides, no more suffice
To fill his heart ; now paled their charms, compared
With royal maidens' portraits, which those maids
In beauty far excelled,—by envoys brought,
And shown by faithful councillors, who longed
To see pure offspring more confirm the throne.

200

CANTO XIX

Agnivarma's voluptuous Reign and Death.

Now after years of wise and glorious rule,
The Son of Raghu placed upon his throne
His son, great Agnivarma, bright as Fire,
And, first 'mid pious students, self-restrained,
In life's last stage passed to Naimisha's grove.
There washed he from his soul all earthly thoughts :—
Instead of pleasure-halls sought Holy ponds,
Strewed on the ground a couch of sacred grass
Instead of silken cushions, dwelt apart
In lowly hut instead of Palace-home,
And careless of reward stored merit up.
No toil he left his son to guard his realm,—
To whom he gave Earth, where all foes were crushed
Beneath his mighty arm,—to eat the fruit,
Not labour to produce. This Prince's mind
Was turned to pleasure : wherefore for some years
Himself dealt justice to the subject World,
Then to his Elders turned the charge of rule,
And gave his own fresh youth to Love's delights.

Then through the Palace of the amorous King
Fair women thronged, the lute's soft music rolled,
And each day's splendid festival was chased
By feast more splendid. Day and night he spent
In love's soft raptures, careless of his folk ;—
And when, much urged by faithful Councillors,
He yielded to his loyal people's wish
To show himself, 'twas but one foot he showed,
Hung from the palace-window ; to that foot,
Resplendent with the beauty of its nails,
A lotus touched with rays of morning-sun,
They did obeisance,—then went home content.

20

30

So, plunged in sensual pleasure, recking not
Of royal duty, goaded on by Love,
The King passed through the seasons of each year
Diversified, but still the same to him.
Yet was his valour dreaded ; rival Kings
Durst not attack him, maddened though he seemed ;
But, as the curse of Daksha wastes the Moon,
Disease, by passion bred, consumed his life.

Still he pursued all pleasure-seeking ways,
Nor hearkened to wise counsel, though he saw
The fatal consequence :—no easy task
Have they who would a man from Pleasure turn,
When once it has seduced him. Pale he grew,
And fell consumption ravaged all his limbs ;
He left his ornaments, and walking, leaned
His weight upon his servants,—while his speech,

40

Weak, hollow, marked the ruin wrought by Love,
And as he slowly wasted in disease,
His race was like the sky when wanes the Moon,
Or as a lake when only mud is left—
Its waters dried, or as a dying lamp.

50

His Ministers long hid the fatal truth,
And told the people, struck with heavy fears :—
“The King makes Sacrifice to win a son,
And therefore lives retired !” Untrue their words ;
For He, though Lord of many wives, unblest,
Died miserably ere he paid the debt
Due to his mighty Sires ; and fell disease,
Defying treatment, snapped his thread of life,
Ere yet he saw his son : so dies a lamp
Before the chilling blast. In darkling grove
Hard by the palace met the Senators,
And with a Priest well-skilled in funeral-rites
In secret laid the body on a pyre :—
Nor told the people what was done, but feigned
Some hope of healing. Next in haste they called
The Chiefs to council, seated on the Throne
The rightful Queen, in whose bright body shone
The hope of Royal seed. That unborn Child,—
Whom with hot tears of sorrow for her Spouse,
Untimely dead, she scalded in her womb,—
Was soon revived by healing waters poured
(Such was the tribal rite !) from golden jars,
To consecrate the Babe. The widowed Queen,

60

70

Who carried 'neath her breast the Royal seed,
Which ripened for the universal weal,
As Earth hides in her womb the late-sown grain,—
Longed for her time to come :—meanwhile she sat
High on her golden throne, and sagely ruled
(Advised by loyal Senators) the State,—
Where all the people honoured her commands !

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explanation : the numerals refer to pages).*

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Bathing is a daily religious duty of high importance.
Bay horses are special steeds of the Sun.
Bhṛigu, 90, a great Ṛishi, son of Manu, to whom was committed the sacred Law-book.
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Çâl-tree, 2, a lofty and stately forest tree (*Vatica robusta*).

Çarabhanga, } 129, two saintly ascetics.
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Çatrughna, 96, "queller of foes," a younger brother of Râma.

Çesha, 89, the mythical Serpent on which Vishṇu sleeps.

Çakravâka, 128, the ruddy-goose, emblem of conjugal love: the birds are fabled to be condemned to constant separation at night.

Chaitraratha, 44, Kuvera's pleasure-garden.

Châtaka, a kind of cuckoo, fabled to live only on rain-drops.

Chitrâ, 5, the star *Spica Virginis*.

Chitrakûta, 114, the mountain, scene of Râma's exile.

Çirîsha, 169, a graceful variety of flowering Acacia.

Daksha, 193, a Saint, whose twenty-seven daughters were wedded to Chandra, the Moon; and whose curse, the punishment of partiality to one of his wives, is the fabled cause of the Moon's periodic waning.

Darbha grass, 129, sacrificial grass, of which *Kuça* is a variety.

Durjaya, 174, a Demon, "hard to conquer."

Dârva grass, 50, a kind of millet (*Panicum dactylon*).

Durvâsa, 159, son of Atri, and a specially choleric Saint.

Dûshana, 117, a Demon, slain by Râma.

Elephants (Celestial), 161, are fabled to uphold the extremities of the world.

Fig-tree, the Indian fig, *Ficus religiosa*: the Peepal.

Gandharvas, Minstrels of heaven, inhabiting Indra's heaven: Southey's "Glendoveer."

Ganeça, 14, the elephant-headed God of wisdom, son of Çiva and Pârvatî.

Gaurî, 13, the "white" Goddess, a name of Pârvatî.

Gokarna, 70, a favourite shrine of Çiva.

Govardhan, 53, a mountain in Brindâban.

Hanumân, 121, son of the Wind, general of Râma's monkey-allies.

Indra's beetle, 104, the cochineal-insect.

Indrajit, 134, surname of Meghanâda, son of Râvaṇa, a valiant Râkshas warrior, who once overcame and bound Indra himself.

Jaimini, 188, a famous Saint, founder of a school of philosophy (the *Pârva-Mimâṃsâ*).

Janaka, 103, the reputed father of Sîtâ, whom he found in a plough-furrow.

Janasthâna, 54, Râvaṇa's capital.

Jatâyû, 118, the Vulture-ally of Râma, slain in defence of Sîtâ.

Kadamba, 160, a flowering tree, bearing orange-coloured blossoms.

Kâlanemi, 153, a Demon slain by Vishṇu.

Kapila, 25, a Sage who, being falsely accused by Sagara's sons of stealing their father's horse for the Sacrifice, burnt them up: by some identified with Çiva.

Kârtavîrya, 51, a famous warrior-king of the Haihayas, who once held Râvaṇa himself in chains.

Kârtikeya, 47, the leader of Heaven's armies, son of Çiva and Pârvatî, the "nursling of the Pleiades (*Kṛittikâs*)": also called Skanda, etc.

Ketaka, 13, a sweet-scented blossoming tree.

Kinçuka, 81, a flowering tree, bearing scentless red blossoms.

Kinnaras, 35, attendants on Kuvera.

Krishṇa, the "dark" God: in our poem a surname of Çiva.

Kos, 135, a measure of distance, about a mile and a half.

Kumbhakarna, 121, Râvaṇa's brother, doomed—lest he should devour the world—to sleep six consecutive months in each year.

Lakshmî, 26, the wife of Vishṇu; also, Fortune, esp. the Glory of Kingship.

Lauhitya, 35, the Brahmaputra river.

Lodhra-tree, 13, a forest tree bearing a yellow flower.

Mânasa lake, 131, a fabled source of Gangâ.

Mârîcha, 102, a Demon emissary of Râvaṇa: he tricked Râma, and was by him slain.

Meru, Mt., 60, the Hindu Olympus. The Sun, circling round Meru, so causes alternate day and night.

Mithilâ, 103, the capital of Vidarbha.

Muni, 147, a saintly recluse, especially one vowed to silence.

- Nabhanga*, 84, Indra's armour-bearer.
- Nāgas*, 171, semi-divine Snakes, dwelling in Pâtâla, beneath the earth.
- Nahusha*, 129, a Demon who had supplanted Indra, and was dashed down to earth by Agastya, whom he had insulted.
- Naimisha*, 192, a sacred grove.
- Nandana*, 77, the pleasure-garden of Indra.
- Nârada*, 70, the Divine Minstrel, friend and counsellor of men.
- Nimi*, 105, founder of the dynasty of Mithilâ, a son of Ikshvâka.
- (*Om*), 2, the "mystic word," beginning the Veda, etc., symbolical of the Hindu Triad : it is equally sacred for Buddhists.
- Omens*, 55, 143, throbbing of the *right* side in men, of the *left* in women, is auspicious ; and *vice versâ*.
- Pâtâla*, 8, the abode of the Nāgas.
- Pâtâla*, 168, a flower.
- Paulastya*, 35, patronymic of Râvaṇa, descended from Pulastya.
- Peepal*, 134, the sacred fig-tree (*Ficus religiosa*), distinguished by its twisted roots.
- Prachetas*, 8, one of the Prajâpatis, *q.v.*
- Prahlâda*, 61, the pious son of Hiranyakaçipu, a Daitya tyrant of the world.
- Prajâpati*, 95, a son of Brahmâ, progenitor of mankind : they were ten in number.
- Punarvâsu*, 104, the fifth and seventh lunar mansion.
- Pushpaka*, 94, Indra's Magic Car, wrested from him by Râvaṇa, and won back by Râma.
- Râhu*, 115, the Dragon who devours the Moon, so causing eclipses.
- Rain-birds*, 39, the Châtakas, *q.v.*
- Râkshasas*, 115, the Demon-foes of the Gods.
- Rati*, 47, "Delight," the wife of Kâma, Love.
- Reed-born God*, 22, Kârtikeya.
- "*Regents of the World*," 18, the eight secondary Gods, Indra, Agni, etc.
- Sacred Cord*, 22, the symbol of investiture for the three "twice-born" classes, marking entrance into the "second life."
- Sâma Veda*, 161, the Veda specially of ritual, arranged for *chanting*.
- Sampâti*, 118, the Vulture-King, brother of Jatâyâ.

(*Sāvitrī*), 157, the Hymn to the Sun, which must be recited every morning.

Seven, 91, a sacred number.

Siddhas, a class of specially pure celestial beings.

Skanda, 38, the God of War, Kārtikeya.

Soma, 49, the Moon.

"*Sound-pervaded* realm," 125, the atmosphere.

Sugrīva, 118, King of Rāma's monkey-allies.

Svāhā, 6, the prayer of the oblation (?=faustum sit !).

Tila, 83, the sesamum.

Trīṇabindu, 75, a famous ascetic.

Vakula, 82, a fragrant flowering tree, fabled to be fertilised by wine sprinkled by women.

Vedas, 37, the three Vedas are the foundation of all wisdom and knowledge, and are held to be eternal.

Viśvakarma, 50, the Hindu Vulcan, fabled to have pared down on his lathe the Sun, when his heat became intolerable.

Yakshas are attendants on Kuvera.

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